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SEA-DOG CHARLIE: or, The Adventures of a Boy Hero.

By W. I. JAMES, Jr.



He had managed to keep his right arm free, and now, reaching down into his pocket, he drew forth his heavy clasp-knife. Raising it to his mouth he opened it with his teeth. He knew he must free himself quickly if at all, for the terrible compression was fast depriving him of animation.

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SEA-DOG CHARLIE;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES OF A BOY HERO.

BY W. I. JAMES, JR.

CHAPTER I.

OUR HERO.

"WELL, Charlie, my boy, this is rather rough on you. Here you are, trudging all alone, along a lonely road in the woods, in the dead of night, and five miles yet to go before you get to the first tavern and a bed. You didn't look forward to this, did you, when you thought yourself the son of the richest man in Millville. Now father's dead, and everything's gone to pay his debts, and here I am, with just two dollars and this old suit of clothes that's on my back, trying to reach the coast, to go to sea as a cabin-boy. Oh, dear! We never know what we're coming to. Dear me! How tired I am; and five miles yet to be walked to-night."

The above soliloquy from a bright-looking, dusty, travel-stained boy of fourteen, as he trudged along wearily a rough, intricate forest road, at nine o'clock at night.

"I ought to have stopped at the tavern five miles back," he continued. "But I was in such a hurry to get on. Well, the more haste the less speed, they say; and I guess that's true, for I don't believe I'll be able to move to-morrow. Hello! What's that? Somebody's coming."

He stepped aside from the path, beneath the branches of a large oak, and remained quiet. The persons, whoever they were, approached rapidly, and stopped opposite the very tree behind whose trunk he had taken refuge.

"Awful night, Jem," said one.

"Awful!" repeated the other. "Just the kind of a night we want, though. Let's stop and rest a bit, Dick."

"All right, mate. It's rough work, trampin' through these woods on such a night as this here. I've had my head nearly knocked off half a dozen times by the limbs."

"So've I. Come out of the path. There's a shower coming up. We'll get under a tree to keep the rain off."

They took refuge under the very tree behind which Charlie stood.

Our hero crept close to the trunk of the huge tree and listened.

"I say, Jem."

"Well?"

"Got any of the stuff left?"

"Plenty of it."

"Give us a slug, then, will ye? It'll keep the cold out've a man's bones this cussed weather."

"Here 'tis, mate. Play light on it, though. We've got work to do to-night, and mustn't get our heads muddled."

"Right ye are, mate. D'y'e know where they keep the plate?"

"Yes. In the pantry."

"Nobody home but the woman and the servants, you say?"

"That's all."

"How far on's the house?"

"Not more'n a mile now. It's the only house there is within three mile o' here."

In an instant Charlie comprehended that it was the design of the men to rob a large house which he had passed a mile back, and he determined to frustrate their object in some manner.

He could do nothing yet, however. His first movement would be heard by the robbers and discovery result. He must remain quiet until they went away.

It was a terrible situation for a boy of fourteen to be placed in. He hardly dared breathe lest they should hear him, and that, he knew, would be death, for the desperate villains would not allow even murder to stand between them and their booty. He wished they would move on, that he might hurry back to the house and warn its inmates, but this they evinced no disposition to do.

"I say, mate," said Jem, as the other ruffian handed back the bottle after taking a long pull at it, "there's no use going on yet awhile. We don't want to commence work till midnight, and needn't start from here till before eleven."

"Heavens!" said Charlie to himself, "am I to be kept here nearly two hours longer by these fellows?"

"Jem," said Dick, suddenly.

"What?"

"Any dogs there?"

"No."

"Glad on't. I hate dogs; they're allus stickin' their noses in other folks' business. Never'll let a fellow more'n get started afore they're after him — yelp! howl! a piece out'n yer leg mebbe, and then if yer don't settle his hash mighty quick the game's up. I brought along a piece o' nice pizen meat for fear."

"I hate 'em too, curse 'em. A dog got me lagged onet when I was a doin' of a nice bit o' work; he caught hold o' the calf o' my leg; hurt so I yelled like pizen; dog held on, wouldn't let go; consequence was, I got nabbed and sent up for five years. I've hated dogs like all times ever since."

"Pity the dog hadn't killed you then and there," thought Charlie.

The minutes passed slowly on, every-one seeming to Charlie an age, compelled, as he was, to remain silent and listen to the disgusting conversation of the two villains, and exposed every moment to the danger of discovery.

"Time to go, Jem," said Dick at last, when it seemed to Charlie as if he had remained beneath the tree an age.

"Here, you carry the bag the rest of the way."

"All right, mate. Give us another toothful out of the bottle to keep the rheumatiz from my bones afore we start."

Dick handed him the bottle and he drank long and lustily.

Charlie remained beneath the tree until the sound of their footsteps died away; then, when he could no longer hear their tread, he left the shelter of the tree and lost no time in following their example.

CHAPTER II.

THE ALARM.

Our hero knew that he must hurry if he would arrive at the house before the burglars.

It was his intention to pass them in the darkness, and, hurrying on, reach the house and put the inmates on their guard before the robbers arrived.

It was necessary that he should leave the path and make his way through the forest, for if he took the road he would encounter the burglars. Turning aside from the path he plunged into the woods among the wet foliage and dripping trees.

The wind had risen, and howled and shrieked

among the tree-tops, sending the branches down on every side.

It was a dangerous task, traveling in the forest on such a night as this, but Charlie resolutely pushed forward, intent only on foiling the villains in their designs of robbery, and perhaps murder.

As he hurried on, he came often in contact with the large trees, bruising himself severely. Many times he was thrown to the ground with violence, his feet having caught in some running vine, but as often he rose quickly and hurriedly pushed on. After half an hour of this he reached the open space around the house. No lights shone. It was dark and gloomy as night itself. Evidently all the inmates had retired.

Our hero listened a moment; he could hear nothing of the burglars. They probably had not yet arrived, and even if they had they were no doubt engaged in their operations on the back part of the house, that being the portion of a mansion which is generally chosen by gentlemen of their class as the most promising point at which to effect an entrance.

He did not dare to call out loudly for fear of bringing the robbers down upon him, if they were at hand; he must ring, however, and trust to the noise of the storm drowning the sound of the bell.

At last, after repeated ringing, footsteps were heard approaching the door.

"Who's there?" cried a voice within.

"Let me in," said Charlie, in a low voice.

"What do you want this time of night?"

"I can't tell you here. Let me in quickly. There's no time to lose."

"No, sir," exclaimed the man. "You don't get in here till I know what you want."

Charlie placed his mouth to the key-hole:

"There's burglars around the house," he whispered.

"Gracious!" exclaimed the man, in a startled tone.

"Let me in and I'll tell you all about it," whispered Charlie. "They may hear me out here."

"How do I know you're not one of 'em?"

"Are you going to let me in or not? If not, I'll be going. I can't stand here all night talking to you, and run the risk of being overheard by the burglars, and knocked on the head."

"Sure you ain't one of 'em, eh?"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Charlie, impatiently. "If you're afraid, say so."

"Who's afraid?"

"You are. You're a confounded coward, and the house will be robbed for your pains. I'm going to leave. I can't stand here an hour and get my head broken at last by the burglars."

"Hold on a minute, I'll let you in."

The bolts were withdrawn, the door unlocked, and Charlie stepped within the passage. The servant carefully fastened the door and advanced close to our hero.

"Now, you young vagabond," he said fiercely, "tell me what you mean by coming into a man's house at this time of night?"

He grasped the boy by the arm and shook him.

"Stop that," cried our hero, angrily. "What do you mean by shaking me in this way? If it wasn't for your mistress, I'd keep quiet after this and let them murder you."

"Who's going to murder us?"

"The burglars, you do. Haven't I told you half a dozen times already?"

"Pshaw! there ain't a burglar within twenty

miles of here," exclaimed the servant contemptuously.

"Now, by all that's provoking!" cried Charlie, "if you're not the greatest fool I ever heard of. What do you suppose I'd come here for, through all the rain, on such a night as this, if it isn't true? Now keep quiet, and I'll tell you all about the burglars. Thereupon he related to the astonished servant all that he had seen and overheard, in the wood.

The servant was a big, overbearing, cowardly fellow, and as Charlie concluded his story, he trembled with fright.

"We'd better give 'em the plate," she said; "they're well armed, and more than a match for us."

"You're a miserable coward!" cried Charlie, contemptuously.

"What can we do?"

"Fight 'em!" said our hero, quietly, "that's what we'll do. Bring that lamp behind the stairs, where it can't be seen from outside."

The man obeyed.

CHAPTER III.

THE BURGLARS.

"How many men are there in the house?" asked our hero.

"Three; the butler, the coachman and myself."

"And you talked of giving up the plate to two burglars!" said Charlie, eying him contemptuously.

"But they're armed and we are not."

"Isn't there a gun on the premises?"

"No, sir, not one."

"Nor a pistol, or any other weapon?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"That's bad," said Charlie.

"Hold on," said the servant. "There's a pistol case in the library."

"Go and get it."

The servant, who was still nervous from the effects of fear, went away and soon returned with the pistol case, which he handed to our hero, who examined the weapons, which he found to be very fine seven-shooters, each chamber of which contained a cartridge.

"We're all right now," said Charlie. "Now go for the other servants."

The butler and coachman soon appeared, the former in high dudgeon.

"I'd like to know what this here means," he said. "Here I've been pulled out o' bed by this fool of a Robert, what wouldn't even let me strike a light to dress by, and bundled off downstairs in the dead hour o' night. What's it mean, anyhow?"

"The house is to be attacked by burglars," said Charlie, addressing the servants collectively. "And they'll carry off everything of value if they're not beaten off or captured. There's no time to explain. I am going to do all I can towards driving them off. Will you help me, or shall I have to attempt the thing alone?"

"Help you!" cried the butler, who evidently was no coward; "of course we will. I'm a match for any confounded robber that ever lived to crack a crib. We'll make mince-meat of 'em in a jiffy."

"Yes, if they'll all fight as well as you," said Charlie, doubtfully.

"Let me see one of 'em hang back, that's all. It'll be worse for him," said the butler, looking fiercely at his subordinates.

"That's the way to talk. And now we must make our preparations. They'll enter the house by the window of the butler's pantry, no doubt. You take one of these pistols, I'll keep the other. We'll do the shooting if there's any to be done. We must conceal ourselves in the butler's room and await their appearance. While they're engaged we can spring out quickly and surprise them. If it comes to a fight, four of us should be able to manage only two."

"I'll manage one and leave the other fellow to you three," said the butler. "I'll teach the devils to come to this house and steal my plate."

He led the way to the room where the plate was stored.

"Be quiet," whispered Charlie, as they halted outside the door. "The villains may be at work now."

They listened, but heard no sound.

"They haven't commenced work yet," said Charlie. "Let's go inside at once."

The butler unlocked the door, and they entered the room softly.

In the corner nearest the window stood a high-backed desk. Behind this they stationed themselves and silently awaited the approach of the burglars.

Very soon a scratching sound was heard as the diamond was used by one of the burglars for the purpose of removing a pane of glass.

This was accomplished quickly, and in a moment the burglar outside removed the fastening and raised the window.

In a moment he stealthily entered the room.

"All quiet, Jem?" asked the burglar, who remained outside.

"Yes, all right," whispered Jem. "Come in, Dick; we'll soon get through this crib."

Dick entered noiselessly.

Jem took from beneath his coat a dark lantern, and removing the slide, allowed a ray of light to shoot out and illuminate the room.

"Hold the lantern, mate," said Jem, "while I operate on this lock."

Dick took the lantern and held it so that the small ray of light, which was permitted to escape, fell directly upon the lock. The other part of the room remained in darkness.

Jem worked on awhile in silence, the noise of the instrument being plainly heard by the party behind the desk.

"Curse the luck!" exclaimed the burglar, in a moment. "I've broken the best tool I have—come here, Dick, and help me."

Placing the lantern upon a table, so that the gleam would still fall upon the lock, Dick advanced to the assistance of his mate.

This was the moment for Charlie. He crept silently from behind the desk, followed by the butler. Both held their pistols ready, the others not daring to face the burglars, cowered in fear behind the desk.

The burglars started, looked up, and saw the figures advancing stealthily toward them.

"Douse the glim, Dick," cried Jem, starting to his feet. "Douse the glim and out!"

As he spoke he drew a murderous-looking knife from his pocket and sprang toward the lantern for the purpose of turning the slide and placing the room in total darkness.

But our hero was too quick for him. Springing toward the lantern he turned the slide entirely open. In an instant the room was brilliantly illuminated.

"Curse ye," cried Jem. "I'll have your blood for that."

Springing forward he brandished the knife over Charlie's head.

Our hero raised his arm slightly.

Bang!

Down dropped Jem upon the floor, where he lay groaning.

Meanwhile the butler, disdaining to use his pistol against one man, grasped Dick, whom he soon mastered and threw stunned upon the floor.

"Now come out from behind that desk, you cowardly hounds!" cried Charlie. "Come out of that and get us some cords."

"Is it all over?" gasped the coachman, from whom the perspiration, so great was his fright, was dripping.

"Yes, it is all over, you coward. Come out here, I tell you, or I shall be tempted to plug you."

The man came out trembling.

"Give me that rope and hold this fellow's hands—hold them, I say! Are you afraid of a wounded man, you coward?"

In a moment the burglars were bound and lay helpless on the floor, cursing the fate that had ordained their capture.

"Now, who will stay and guard these men until morning?" our hero asked.

"I will," said the butler. "And if they get away from me they are welcome to go."

"What's all this about?" said a soft voice at the door.

Charley turned and beheld standing in the doorway a beautiful woman of thirty, with a pale, frightened face, and with a rich wrapper thrown loosely around her.

"That's my mistress," whispered the butler.

Our hero at once went to her and explained. Mrs. Chambers was very grateful. She insisted on Charlie's staying there that night.

"In the morning my husband will return and will talk further," she said.

Charlie consented, went to bed and slept soundly, despite the excitement through which he had passed.

In the morning Mr. Chambers returned and was given an account of our hero's courage. He at once sent for him and heard the story from his own lips.

"You are a very brave boy," he said. "And what is it your intention to do now?"

"To go to sea, sir," answered Charlie.

"Myself and Mrs. Chambers sail next week for the Sandwich Islands," said Mr. Chambers.

"My health is not very good, and my physician has ordered me a sea voyage. How would you like to go with us?"

It is needless to say that our hero accepted the offer joyfully, and a few days thereafter the stanch ship *Falcon* bore him and his new found friends to sea.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVIL-FISH.

For many days the good ship *Falcon* bounded on her way. The winds were fair and strong. No adverse storms arose to keep them back—no hurricane bearing death and destruction in its track swift across the ocean, and the stanch craft bounded merrily and swiftly onward over the deep blue sea. But this was changed when they arrived at the equator, for there was now that which the sailor dreads far more than either storm or hurricane—a perfect calm—a calm so entire that the feather that was tossed into the air descended perpendicularly to the deck.

For many days the ship lay rising and falling with the long, unbroken swell; the sails hung idly from their yards, and the vessel drifted to and fro at the mercy of the current.

The sailors lolled idly about the deck, sweltering under the intense heat of the tropical sun.

They cursed the calm; they prayed for wind, even though it might bring a hurricane.

At last it came—not with a shriek and howl and angry clamor, as they expected, after so prolonged a calm, not with an angry cry for vengeance, because it had been shorn of its power for so long a time, but a gentle, peaceful rippling of the waters which gradually increased until the sails were filled with a good, stiff, favorable breeze, and the old ship cut the water merrily.

Now were the hearts of the brave old salts gladdened, and many a jolly roundelay they sung and many a vote of thanks accorded to old Boreas for having sent the wind.

The passage from the equator to Cape Horn was very quick, but here adverse winds and strong gales were encountered, which were so baffling, and the storms so terrible in their character that for days and weeks they beat about vainly trying to make headway against the storms and pass the cape, until the wearied, worn-out sailors cursed the continuous gales in stronger terms than they had cursed the calms.

They rounded the cape at last, despite the efforts of the elements to prevent their passage and emerged into the Pacific.

But here a new trouble awaited them. They discovered that their supply of water was running short, and that they must remain on shore allowance until an island several hundred miles to the northward and nearly in their course, was reached.

A week later the ship was hove to under the lee of a beautiful island, and a boat was lowered.

The sight of land so near and beautiful inspired our three passengers with an intense longing to again place their feet upon terra firma.

Neither of them had ever taken a sea voyage before, and the desire to again step upon firm land, after having been confined for months to the ship, was strong. Our young hero was the first to express the wish in words.

"I should like to go with the boat, Captain Inman," he said, addressing the rough but kind old sea-dog, who paced the quarter-deck.

"Getting tired of the old *Falcon*, eh, Charlie?"

"Not exactly that, captain; but I should like to stretch my limbs upon firm land once more."

"All right, Charlie; jump aboard."

"My wife and I think that the land looks very enticing, too, Captain Inman," said Mr. Chambers.

"Aye, aye, sir; you've caught the fever, too. Hurry aboard then, they are all ready."

They descended the ladder and entered the boat which, leaving the ship, rowed rapidly to shore.

They rowed along the shore for half a mile, until around a headland, which hid them from the ship, they entered the mouth of a beautiful river whose waters sparkled clear and bright.

At the mouth of the stream our three friends disembarked, while the boat continued on up the river to a point two miles above where the water was no longer impregnated with the salt of the open sea.

They strolled along the shore, examining the curious, beautiful shells, with which the stream abounded.

Mr. Chambers wandered off beyond sight and hearing around the headland, and Charlie and the lady were left alone.

The shore on which they sat to rest was sandy and receded gradually, but twenty yards above them a low line of broken rocks jutted out thirty feet into the water.

Suddenly from around the rocks a dark object appeared floating on the water.

The object was thin and flat and of a dark leaden hue.

It floated along, apparently, at the mercy of the current, until it entered a fissure in the rocks a few feet from the shore.

Here it remained stationary, half hidden by the

shadow and the fissure, rising and falling with every motion of the waves.

"What is it?" said Mrs. Chambers.

"It must be something which they've lost overboard, and it's floated down with the current."

"Are you sure it isn't some animal?"

Charlie laughed.

"Who ever heard of a fish, or animal either, which could turn into a floating bundle?" he said.

He advanced toward the object. He reached out his hand toward it.

Then, and not till then, he saw that it was a living thing: he saw it move. From it hung eight long, thin, pliable limbs.

It seemed covered with a dust incapable of being washed away by the water.

It was more than horrible; it was foul. He felt that it was something monstrous.

He turned to retreat and leave the horrible, slimy thing, but it was too late.

A limb ten feet long shot out from the hideous creature and clutched him by the arm.

A feeling of horror passed over him. The limb which clutched him was cold and slimy. Around his arm in a second it wound itself; it reached his chest, sharp pains were felt along the flesh over which the flabby arm had passed. It felt as though innumerable sharp points had pierced his flesh and were sucking forth his blood.

He strove desperately to free himself, but could not. His struggles only seemed to rivet his bonds more firmly. The form which wound around him was strong as iron and cold as ice.

As it wound itself around his body it became long and thin.

An indescribable feeling of pain, of agony passed over him.

Innumerable objects were pulling at his flesh. A second form, long, flexible, and shiny darted out from the creature's body. It struck his stomach and wound around him there.

They felt their way around him, elongating themselves as they advanced. They were long and thin, pointed at their extremities, but grew wide and flat as they advanced nearer the body, if that immovable glutinous mass, which lay upon the water, and from whence those terrible binding ligaments shot forth like lightning, really was the body of the monster.

He had managed to keep his right arm free, and now, reaching down into his pocket, he drew forth his large heavy clasp-knife. Raising it to his mouth he opened it with his teeth.

He knew he must free himself quickly if at all, for the terrible compression was fast depriving him of animation.

He knew that if the terrible bands which wound themselves around him each instant tighter were not soon destroyed he must quickly die.

He looked around for Mrs. Chambers. She was lying where he had left her, motionless. She had fainted.

He raised the knife high above his head and brought it down with all his might.

Horror! The sharp blade made no impression upon the ligature. It was a leathery substance, impossible to divide with the knife. It was impossible to secure an entrance.

Four of the ligatures were now around him, and he could see four more were attached to the rock, by means of which the monster held itself in its position.

Great God! must he die here? Must this horrible creature drag him out to sea? Must this cold, slimy, glutinous monster devour him with its toothless mouth and the sucking cups which were affixed to each of its ligatures. The pressure grew tighter. The cups affixed to the ligatures, which wound themselves each moment tighter around him, were drawing his flesh into themselves through his thin clothing.

They shifted themselves from time to time, and found new resting places.

He struck a harder blow with his knife. It did not penetrate, but it seemed to irritate the monster, for another of the tentacles detatched itself from the rock, and dashed at the arm which held the blade.

By a quick movement he prevented this, and it struck his body near the chest, about which it wound itself with a horrible pressure, increasing the misery which he already endured.

They were binding him so tightly that the breath came painfully, and in quick, short gasps. Suddenly the flat, glutinous, leaden mass which formed the body of the monster became agitated.

From the center of the mass appeared a protuberance which emerged from under a thin fold which until then had concealed it.

In the center of this head two eyes blazed forth; two green, glassy orbs which seemed almost human in their intelligence.

These eyes were fixed on Charlie.

A terrible mouth, devoid of teeth, which sucked the flesh up into it like the barber's cup, by its

wonderful power of exhausting air, menaced him.

If that once struck his chest, no power on earth could save him.

He struck again with his knife, rendered desperate by his terrible danger, and hoping to pierce the monster.

Vain hope! The body and head of the slimy thing was so far away that he could not reach them with the knife, and he might as well try to sever adamant as one of the dreadful ligatures which were pressing and sucking out his very life. It did more harm than good, for irritated again by the blow, the monster thrust another of its eight radii swift as an arrow, and clutched him.

And now the monstrous thing was making ready to dart upon him with its horrible slimy mouth. He knew it, for the head advanced slowly towards him, emerging further from the glutinous mass which formed the body, yet keeping carefully beyond the reach of the knife which he held ready.

Its baleful eyes fixed themselves upon his face as if to stupefy him.

He grew faint from exhaustion and pain.

Of its eight radii six encircled Charlie, while two clung to the rock.

Two hundred suckers were upon him, tormenting him with agony and loathing.

Gigantic arms, each ten feet long, were around him, furnished inside with living blisters, eating into his flesh.

His brain reeled and his senses almost deserted him.

His companion had recovered from the swoon, and now sat upon the sands wringing her hands in great agony at his danger, and her utter inability to help him.

The boat was right in sight. He must die and be dragged into a dark sea cavern by the monstrous thing and be devoured.

A sudden thrill passed over him.

He recognized the thing which had him in its grasp. He had read the description of it many times, and shuddered as he read.

He was within the grasp of the sea vampire, the Devil Fish.

CHAPTER V.

SAVAGES.

IT was the devil fish—that monstrous thing that encircles its victim with its slimy arms, which sucks his blood with its two hundred suckers and its horrible, toothless mouth, whose grasp is death; which drains its victim of the last drop of blood, and leaves the body at the bottom of the sea, to be devoured by the crabs and fishes.

Such was the monster whose arms encircled Charlie.

The end was fast approaching.

The glutinous mass which composed the body of the slimy thing became slightly agitated.

It moved with a rocking, vibratory motion to and fro.

All at once its color changed.

From its former dull, leaden color the body changed instantaneously to a bright red hue.

The blood seemed to have receded from the eight long tentacles and become concentrated in the body.

It emitted, at frequent intervals, flashes of phosphorescent light.

Charlie had read much of these sea-monsters, and now that he recognized the fearful thing he knew what this change portended.

The monster was about to attack him.

He knew that the only vulnerable part of the monster was its head, and this could only be reached at the instant when it darted towards him, for the purpose of fastening its hideous mouth upon his neck.

He had kept his right arm free from the coils that wound round his body.

He raised it aloft, with the knife firmly clenched in his hand, ready to bring it down upon the head the moment it should spring.

The spring was made.

Swift as an arrow in its flight, the head, with its hideous, flabby mouth extended, shot towards his neck.

The knife descended, driven with the force of desperation and despair.

His aim was true.

The point entered below the hideous, green, glassy, eyes, and penetrated deep into the head.

Instantly the folds relaxed—the tentacles relaxed their horrible grip—the radii their terrible hold which compressed him almost to suffocation, and fell into the sea.

The devil fish, the sea vampire, the horrible, loathsome monster, was dead.

It was time.

His thrust had been the last, despairing effort of his expiring strength.

A sense of suffocation, mingled with joy, overcame him.

He sank down upon the sand.

He could feel the warm blood trickling in little streams down his back.

A feeling as though a hundred darts were piercing his flesh passed over him.

All things grew dark before his eyes.

The knife dropped from his nerveless hand. His senses left him, and he lay stark and stiff beside the monster he had slain.

A moment only his swoon continued, and then he became conscious of surrounding objects.

Mrs. Chambers was standing over him, chaffing his temples with her fine, white hands.

"My brave boy, my noble boy," she said, "are you much hurt?"

Charlie looked up and smiled.

"No," he said. "It's all over now. But I couldn't have stood it a great while longer. It was strangling me."

The lady shuddered as she looked at the horrible thing, hideous and terrible in its repulsiveness.

"I thought it must overcome you," she said. "I had no power to move or cry out while you were battling with it. How bravely you battled with the monster. When most men would have died with terror, you had no thought of giving up, my brave, brave boy!"

"I was fighting for my life, lady," said our hero. "Had I given up, I should now have been lying at the bottom of the ocean, with that dead monster drawing forth my blood with his horrible suckers, at his leisure. It was not death, simply, which I dreaded, but the idea of being devoured by the monster. The thought almost maddened me, and I fought with desperation."

A shadow passed before them.

They looked up.

They saw a dark form, nearly naked, crouching almost to the ground, approaching from behind the rocks.

It was followed by another, and still another. They sprang to their feet and prepared to fly. Too late!

They were surrounded by the savages. Charlie drew his knife and prepared to defend himself and his companion.

CHAPTER VI.

ESCAPE.

THE savages were armed with clubs and spears fastened to the end of which were sharpened pieces of iron and steel, obtained, probably, from the wreck of some ship which had been cast upon the shore of the island.

They were nearly naked, their only covering being a cloth which was wrapped around their loins.

They advanced towards Charlie and the lady in a body.

It was clearly the intention of the savages to capture, and not kill them at present, for had they wished their death nothing would have been easier than to thrust their long spears through his body, while yet at a safe distance from his knife.

At a sign from him who appeared their chief, they threw themselves upon him in a body.

He fought desperately.

He struck out right and left with his sharp and heavy knife, and more than one of his assailants received deep gashes from its blade.

But what could one boy do against a score of savage assailants?

He was quickly borne down by the weight of superior numbers, and disarmed.

His hands were tied with stripes of bark, and he was helpless.

The savages now gathered round the body of the monster, which lay part on the shore and part in the water.

It was evident that they knew what it was, for they kept up a continuous chattering over it, made gestures, as though endeavoring to draw themselves from its embrace, pointed to the gash in the head, and looked at Charlie with admiring glances.

It was evident that they cherished intense admiration for the boy who, unaided, could kill a devil fish.

Having contemplated the body of the monster to their satisfaction, they, by gestures, gave our hero and his companion to understand that they must follow them.

Knowing the uselessness of resistance, they arose, and prepared to obey.

Charlie knew that if they could not escape they would be reserved for a horrible fate. A fate, than which death by the devil fish would not have been worse.

He knew that if they could not escape within a very short time they must be killed and eaten by the cannibals.

But he had strong hopes of rescue.

Mr. Chambers would soon return—the boat's crew, which had ascended the river, would soon come back with the water, and miss them.

Assistance would arrive from the ship; they would be followed, and perhaps released, if the assistance reached them in time, before they had become victims.

To resist now would be to sacrifice themselves at once, for the savages, angered by the pain from the cuts which they had received from his knife, would surely kill them.

They followed their captors, therefore, with apparent willingness.

For hours, until dark, their captors hurried them along, threatening them with their spears when their pace was not rapid enough.

It was evident that the savages feared pursuit, for even after nightfall they kept up the same steady tramp, until a little opening was reached.

Here they prepared to pass the night.

Small fires were lighted, over which large pieces of juicy meat were cooked, part of which was offered to the captives, who, recognizing the necessity of keeping up their strength, did not refuse the meat.

The hands and feet of the captives were then bound with stout, but pliable strips of bark, a guard was set, and the savages, lying down around the fire, with their feet to the blaze, were in a moment sleeping.

The savage who was placed on guard resisted the feeling of drowsiness that crept over him manfully, for a while, but at last his head began to nod, and fell forward upon his breast.

In a moment he was sound asleep, his heavy breathing mingling with that of the other sleepers.

"Charlie," whispered Mrs. Chambers, "are you awake?"

"Yes."

"My hands are loose."

"Thank God! I have been trying to loosen mine for the last hour, but I can't budge them."

"What shall I do?"

"Take the bark from your feet; then lean over and untie my hands."

In a moment this was done, and our hero sat up and removed the thongs which confined his ankles.

At this instant the savage on guard partially awakened and looked around.

The hearts of the two were in their throats.

If the savage came up and examined them they were lost.

They dropped instantly to the earth, and breathed heavily, as though sleeping.

After a moment's scrutiny the savage appeared satisfied.

His head dropped upon his bosom, and he slept again.

Charlie arose upon his feet.

"Come," he said. "He may awaken again at any moment, and we must be far from here."

They advanced softly towards the forest.

Suddenly Charlie stopped, and turning, advanced towards the sleeping figures.

He took from the side of the nearest sleeper a spear.

Rejoining his companion, they advanced rapidly across the opening and entered the woods.

Before they had advanced a hundred yards into the forest a startling yell announced that their escape had been discovered.

"Run!" cried Charlie. "Run! We must depend upon our speed."

CHAPTER VII.

A LEAP INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH.

THEY ran swiftly through the trees, followed by the savages, who seemed unerringly to strike the trail.

The bushes and overhanging limbs came in contact with them, but they heeded it not.

They were flying from a horrible fate.

Suddenly a wall of rock rose up before them—a rock, whose steep sides rendered climbing, at the place where they struck it, out of the question.

They stopped and looked at each other in consternation.

Mrs. Chambers sank upon the ground in despair.

"My God!" she cried. "Has Heaven itself turned against us?"

"Don't give up yet," cried Charlie. "Come! Let's run along the rock, and look for a place to ascend. Don't despair. We may yet escape."

The yell of their pursuers rang out startlingly near upon the still night air.

"Come!" whispered Charlie. "Come! we have no time to lose."

She staggered to her feet, and ran wearily by his side along the rocky wall.

Suddenly they entered a fissure in the rock, through which they ran until the end was reached.

A narrow pathway led upward towards the summit of the rock.

Up this they clambered quickly until they reached the top.

They ran along the summit.

Suddenly they recoiled in horror.

The rock terminated abruptly.

Another step and they would have been precipitated into the depths below.

A perpendicular wall of rock arose on either side, impossible to climb.

The only mode of quitting the rock was that by which they had come.

They looked at each other in despair.

"We are lost, Charlie," said Mrs. Chambers.

"I fear we are," said Charlie, quietly.

"Is there no way of escape?"

"I fear not."

"Charlie," said Mrs. Chambers, looking at him with a determined light shining in her eyes. "Well?"

"I would rather die now than be taken again by those terrible men."

"And so would I."

"If it comes to the worst I shall leap from the cliff."

Charlie shuddered involuntarily.

"Will you follow me?"

"Yes."

They grasped each other's hands.

They were determined upon death rather than re-capture.

The yell broke with startling distinctness from below.

"There they come," said Charlie.

"Yes," said the lady calmly. "Let us make ready for the leap."

"Not yet. I have the spear. I can keep them back for some time. They shall pay dearly for our lives."

The path which led upward to the shelf upon which they were standing was not wide enough for two to pass abreast.

The savages would be obliged to mount the summit one by one. He would be sure of at least one life.

He stationed himself at the opening, and prepared to receive his enemies.

The yell died away. All was quiet. They could hear the savages beating about among the thick brush. They could see the light from the torches which they carried, shining against the rocks.

They had evidently lost the trail, and were searching for it.

A ray of hope crossed the minds of the fugitives. Perhaps the savages would continue searching for their trail among the bushes, and would not examine the rock at all.

The lights receded. They were leaving the vicinity of the rock. They breathed more freely. They might yet escape.

"They are leaving," whispered Mrs. Chambers.

"We will yet—"

"Hush!" whispered Charlie. "Some one is coming up the slope."

The noise of some one toiling up the steep ascent was heard.

Our hero remained quiet, his body concealed by a rock which blocked up a greater part of the passage, waiting until his enemy came within striking distance.

On came the savage. Charlie could hear his labored breathing, so close was he now, as he toiled up the slope.

He caught hold of the summit, and endeavored to draw himself upon it.

This was the moment for which our hero had been waiting. He grasped the spear firmly in his right hand, and drove it forward with all his strength.

The point struck the savage in the throat, and penetrated through and through. He fell backward down the slope, carrying with him the spear, which remained sticking in his neck.

One horrible, unearthly cry broke from his lips, as he fell backward. Then all was silent, except the gurgling sound caused by the life-blood as it welled forth upon the rock.

Mrs. Chambers shuddered, and placed her hands over her ears to shut out the fearful sound.

"Oh, God! this is terrible!" she exclaimed.

A loud yell broke from the savages below. They had heard the death-cry of their companion, and were hurrying to avenge his death.

On they came, up the rugged pathway, until they saw the form of the dead savage, with the spear still sticking in his throat.

They gathered around the body, making the night hideous with their cries. They shook their spears and clubs threateningly at the summit of

the rock. Then suddenly, with one wild, blood-curdling yell, they simultaneously sprang forward.

"Come," said Charlie, grasping his companion by the hand. "Come! it is time to take the leap."

With the calmness of desperation they advanced to the edge of the cliff.

The savages passed through the defile, reached the summit, and saw them there. They bounded forward with yells of exultation.

Charlie grasped his companion with his left hand; with his right he pointed downward over the cliff.

"Hold!" he cried: "Hold, you fiends! Advance but one step further, and we leap!"

The savages paused an instant in dismay. They could not understand the words, but they knew what the gesture portended.

They gathered together around their leader, and appeared to be awaiting his instructions.

"Be ready," whispered Charlie to his companion. "They may spring forward at any moment."

His companion made no answer. She was praying. Her beautiful face was pale, but calm. She recognized that death was near, but did not fear it. The expression upon her face was heavenly.

A halo seemed to shine around it.

Suddenly the savages sprang forward.

The fugitives leaped outward from the rock, and vanished in the darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DARK PASSAGE.

THEIR fall was broken by a ledge of rock which jutted out from the main wall to a distance of five feet.

Upon this rock, twenty feet below the summit, they struck, and lay for a moment stunned and senseless.

Charlie was the first to speak.

"Are you hurt, Mrs. Chambers?" he said.

"No. Not seriously. Where are we?"

"On a ledge of rock, I think, between the summit and the bottom of the chasm."

"Can we get down safely?"

"I don't know. Lie still. Don't speak for a moment. They are bending over the rock with their torches."

They remained perfectly still, hugging the side of the wall as closely as possible with their bodies.

They could see the savages plainly, peering down into the chasm, but the light did not penetrate far enough down into the darkness to reveal them.

Satisfied that they could discover nothing, the savages withdrew, and the fugitives could hear a confused chattering at the summit.

"We must leave the ledge," whispered Charlie.

"Had we not better stay here until morning? We are safe here. They think we are dashed to pieces at the bottom of the chasm."

"No. They are acquainted with every foot of this ledge. They will be down here in a few moments."

"If they suspect that we are here, why don't they descend at once?"

"Because they probably have not strips of bark stout enough to bear their weight. They will soon procure more, and no doubt descend at once."

"What can we do?"

"We must try to descend from the ledge."

"But how?"

"I don't know. Remain here, while I search for a path leading down below."

"Don't be gone long, Charlie. I shall be very anxious until you return."

"I shall not stay long. I'll return soon whether I find a path or not, for the savages may return at any moment, and if you are taken I'll be with you."

"You are a noble boy, Charlie."

Our hero arose to his feet, and crouching low, concealing his body as much as possible in the shadow of the rock, he crept along the ledge.

He examined every part of the ledge as he passed along, but there was no break in the cliff. The wall of rock descended perpendicularly for fifty feet.

Suddenly he came upon an opening in the side of the solid rock, a passage not more than four feet square opening into the side of the cliff.

Stooping, he entered; he passed through the opening and stood within. He stood erect; the height of the place he could not determine, for it was farther than he could reach.

He advanced further into the place. It seemed to be a long and narrow fissure in the rock, whose length he could not determine.

Within, it was dark as Erebus. He could distinguish nothing. He could distinguish

mouth of the fissure, for compared with the dense darkness which reigned within, the night outside was comparatively light.

He determined to bring his companion to this place. They could penetrate into its interior, and conceal themselves from observation. It offered their only hope, for if they remained upon the ledge, their capture was certain, and there was no means so far as he could discover of descending it.

He had no time to explore the place before bringing his companion, for in the meantime the savages might descend the rocks and take her. Whatever should be done, must be done quickly.

He left the fissure, and crouching low in the shadow of the rock, quickly rejoined his companion.

He was just in time. The savages were lowering a stout thong of bark towards the ledge, and Mrs. Chambers crouched in terror beside the wall.

"Look, Charlie," she whispered. "See! the y're lowering the rope. In a moment more they'll be upon us. Hurry! Let us go."

She started up, and turned to run along the ledge.

"Hold on," whispered Charlie. "We must secure that rope. If we go now, they'll be upon us before we can escape."

"No, no! Don't stay a moment longer. Are you mad, Charlie, that you linger? You cannot take the rope from them."

"Wait a moment," said Charlie, confidently. "I'll show you."

The rope, or bark, continued slowly descending until it reached the ledge.

"Now," said Charlie. "Stand aside."

Catching the rope in both hands, he exerted all his strength in one quick, sharp jerk.

Taken entirely unawares, the savage who held the rope, was thrown off his balance.

He threw out his arms wildly in the air, and made frantic exertions to save himself, but without avail.

His companions rushed to his aid.

Too late!

With a wild shriek which echoed wildly through the gorge, he fell, striking the ledge head downward, spattering his brains in Charlie's face.

All was silent for a moment, and then a yell of rage arose, so thrilling, so horrible, so fierce, that the fugitives who heard it shuddered, and pressed close to the wall.

They need expect no mercy if they are captured now.

They had gained some time by the maneuver.

Their enemies could not pursue them until a new rope was made, to replace that which had fallen over the cliff.

"Come," said Charlie.

"Where?"

"I'll show you."

They crept rapidly, but quietly along the shelf until they reached the entrance to the fissure.

"Go in," said Charlie.

"What! into that dark hole?"

"Yes. It's all right. There's no danger. I've been there."

"But will not the savages follow us?"

"I don't know. It's our only chance. Perhaps we can hide and escape them. I'll go first. Follow me."

They entered the fissure, and pressing close to the wall for guidance, advanced into the darkness.

For half an hour they walked slowly on.

The length of the fissure seemed interminable. Suddenly a small opening appeared.

It became larger as they advanced.

They were apparently again nearing the open air.

They experienced a sensation of relief.

They had been so long in darkness so dense that it was impossible to see the hand when held before the eyes, that the sight was welcome.

They pressed joyfully onward.

They passed through the entrance.

They stood upon a rocky ledge overlooking a deep chasm.

Astonishment and dismay were depicted upon their countenances.

They stood upon the very ridge they had left half an hour previously.

Instead of going straight forward along the passage, they had unwittingly, in the darkness, turned off, and by another fissure had come back to the very point from which they had started.

What was to be done now?

The savages were not yet in sight, but they could hear them talking upon the ledge.

Evidently some of them had descended, and were awaiting the arrival of their companions before commencing search for the fugitives.

No time was to be lost.

In a moment the whole body of the savages would be swarming along the ledge.

"Come," said Charlie, "we must try the fissure again."

They entered quickly, and moved along at a quick pace through the darkness.

Speed was absolutely necessary now, and must be maintained even at the risk of falls and bruises.

Looking back after a moment, they saw the gleam of a torch at the entrance. Their enemies were upon their track.

Mrs. Chambers trembled and drew closer to her companion.

"Hurry!" she exclaimed. "Go faster, Charlie. Great heavens! we shall be taken yet."

"Courage!" whispered Charlie. "Courage! Don't give way. We'll escape the villains yet."

They hurried along faster still. A turn in the wall shut out from their view the torch. Any moment they might be precipitated into a yawning chasm, but even at the risk of this, their break-neck pace must be maintained, for death would be no greater evil than recapture.

For three-quarters of an hour they hurried along in this manner, and during that time never caught another glimpse of their pursuers' torches, although they knew that they must be close at hand.

Suddenly the passage became narrower. Its width diminished so sensibly that they could touch each of its walls with their hands.

It became narrower still, and they were compelled to pass singly along it. They felt a current of cold air drawing through the passage. They were nearing the open air.

A sharp turn in the passage disclosed an opening to their view. They pushed on hurriedly, and in a moment stood upon a ledge similar to that which they had left.

Yet it was not the same, for while the sides of the former descended perpendicularly, rendering it impossible for even the agile chamois to climb the rocky wall, the descent from this shelf was not so steep, but gradually and comparatively easy to descend.

They uttered an exclamation of joy, as they comprehended that they could escape from the passage and their foes.

Stepping hastily from the ledge, for they had no time to spare, their pursuers were close upon them, they grasped the jutting crags and bushes which grew among the crevices in the rocks, and lowered themselves down; a single mis-step would have been fatal, for they would assuredly have fallen to the bottom of the gorge, striking stones and boulders in their descent.

They descended in safety, however, and gazed around them. They were standing in a deep gorge. High rocks were above them to the height of fifty feet above their heads.

As far as their eyes could reach into the darkness, the chasm continued.

It would not do to stand idly there. They must leave the gorge, and strike out into the open country, where they could conceal themselves, perhaps, until the danger was past, and the savages had given up the search.

Turning to the right, they ran hurriedly along the chasm.

Looking up, they saw the torches of the savages blazing above them, at the entrance to the passage of the rock.

The bottom of the chasm was nearly level, and the fugitives dashed rapidly forward.

Suddenly the gorge terminated, and they entered the open country.

"Thank God!" exclaimed our hero, as they emerged. "We are safe! Let them catch us now if they can."

A ringing yell broke forth upon the air.

A score of savages sprang out from behind the rocks, and surrounded them.

An instant later, and they were lying bound and helpless upon the ground, surrounded by the exultant, yelling savages.

CHAPTER IX.

SAVED.

THEY uttered no cry.

They spoke no word.

They were utterly hopeless now of escape.

Each moment they expected death.

In a few moments the party who had pursued them came up.

After a while they drew off from the captain and appeared to be holding a council.

They squatted upon their haunches around a small fire which they had kindled, and became engaged in animated conversation.

Presently, as with one accord, they arose, and while two guarded the captain, the others proceeded to the woods, whence they returned in a moment, bearing in their arms a quantity of wood.

This they placed in fire-piles, and ignited it.

The captives looked on wonderingly.

One of the savages now drew a knife from the cloth about his loins, and commenced sharpening it on a piece of smooth stone.

Having felt its edge, he arose, as though satisfied with its sharpness, and approached the captives.

In an instant the horrible truth dawned upon their minds that they were to be slaughtered and eaten by the cannibals.

It was a horrible, horrible fate, from which there seemed to be no escape.

They were bound hand and foot.

They were powerless to even make an effort to avert their fearful doom.

Fear overcame Mrs. Chambers.

She fainted.

She, at least, would not feel the knife as it severed her tender flesh.

Charlie was calm.

He dreaded death, he was so young to die, but he knew that supplication was of no avail, and he resolved to meet his fate bravely, and the terrible agony which the cut across his throat would give him, with fortitude.

A moment, and the pain would be over.

The agony would only be momentary, and then would come oblivion.

What then?

He shuddered, and a sickening sensation came over him as he thought of the horrible men eating his flesh, tearing it with their white glistening teeth, devouring his body and that of his companions.

The butcher approached.

With one hand he clutched the poor boy's hair, bending his head far back, that his throat might be fairly exposed.

With the other hand he raised the knife aloft.

Charlie closed his eyes and awaited the moment when the knife should be drawn across his throat.

He felt the sharp edge touch his flesh.

All would be over in a moment now.

A jet of warm blood struck his face.

It was not his own, for he had felt no pain.

The knife had not yet entered his throat.

He heard a loud report.

The knife dropped from the executioner's hand.

He fell forward upon his face.

Instantly a volley from the rocks was heard, followed by another and another.

Charlie opened his eyes and looked around.

He saw savages lying motionless upon the ground. Others were writhing in agony. The remainder were running at the top of their speed toward the outlet to the gorge, while down the rocks came a score of blue-coated sailors, hurrying toward him.

He was rescued.

He comprehended it now.

At the very moment when death seemed certain —when the knife had almost entered his throat—he had been saved.

Excess of joy overpowered him.

His brain reeled: the forms of the dead and dying cannibals became indistinct; he fainted from very joy.

CHAPTER X.

AT SEA AGAIN.

WHEN he recovered consciousness the boatswain was bending over him, removing the bonds from his hands and feet.

Mr. Chambers had clasped his wife in his arms.

"Oh, my darling! My beautiful darling!" he cried. "Safe—safe at last!"

Mrs. Chambers looked up and smiled.

"You have to thank that brave boy yonder," she said. "To him I owe my life."

"He saved my life, darling, when he preserved yours. How can we ever repay him?"

"We cannot. We can only thank him."

He arose and advanced to Charlie's side.

He grasped his hand and wrung it heartily.

"My brave, brave boy!" he said. "My hero You are my son now. You have no father and no mother. You shall be my child now, and I will care for you, my brave, heroic boy."

Charlie made no reply —his heart was too full for utterance.

He grasped the hand that clasped his with a firmer pressure.

"I say, Charlie," said Mills, "we didn't arrive a moment too soon, did we?"

"No. A second later and I should have been dying. How did you happen to find us here, Mills?"

"I'll tell you all about it. You see, a short time after you were captured, Mr. Chambers returned to where he had left you. Of course he didn't find you, but he did find that infernal monster on the sands. Did you kill the thing, Charlie?"

"Yes."

"Well, at first he thought that the monster had destroyed you, but upon examining it he saw that couldn't have been the case, for the thing's head was nearly off. You must have given it a desperate blow, Charlie."

"I struck with all my might, I assure you, Mills."

"I don't doubt it, from the evidence. While examining the monster, Mr. Chambers saw the prints of the savages' feet upon the sand, and he saw at once that a struggle had taken place. He recognized the prints of yours and the lady's shoes, and knew at once that you had been captured. The boat came up, and he implored the sailors to go with him in pursuit of the cannibals, but the brave fellows were not armed, and there were only six of them. Pursuit would have been madness. They rowed back to the ship, told the story to the captain, who at once armed nearly the whole crew, and sent them to the rescue. We took the trail and followed it till dark. We were then compelled to stop. Half an hour ago we heard these devils yell. The whole camp was aroused; we came and found this fellow here just about to cut your throat. I drew a bead on him and tumbled him over, just in time to save you."

Charlie pressed the boatswain's hand gratefully.

"They then fired a volley," continued Mills. "You see the result."

He pointed to the dead and dying cannibals. They encamped in the gorge that night.

Watches were set, but they were not troubled further by the cannibals.

In the morning they commenced the march back to the sea, which they reached without any difficulty.

The anchor was lifted, and the prow of the stanch old ship was turned toward her destined port.

CHAPTER XI.

MUTINY.

For several days all went on well.

The wind was fair and strong, and the *Falcon* cut through the water at a rate that promised soon to carry her to her destined port.

The long-boat was lashed nearly amidships.

It was covered with canvas, but our hero had discovered, while prying around, that one side of the covering was loose.

One night, some time after dark, he raised the canvas, and, unnoticed by the sailors who were gathered in a group at the forward hatch, with a boy's instinctive longing to go everywhere, crept within the boat.

It was very nice within there, he thought, protected from the dew, and he was disposing himself comfortably in the bottom of the boat, when two of the sailors approached and leaned against it.

They at once commenced a conversation, to which our hero listened.

"We're to commence operations in the third mate's watch," said one. "All the rest of the officers'll be in their bunks by that time, and it'll be easy to dispose of 'em. We can knock the third luff on the head and throw him overboard without alarming the other."

"Are all the crew with us?" asked the other.

"All but Mills, the boatswain. He's so confounded thick with the officers and the passengers since that affair with the cannibals that I didn't dare say a word to him for fear he'd blow."

"Then we'll have to fix him like the rest."

"After it's all over we'll give him a chance to join us. If he refuses, he'll have to walk the plank like the rest of 'em."

"How about the passengers and the boy?"

"Walk the plank."

"What then? After they're all disposed of?"

"Then for the money. There's a hundred thousand dollars in the cabin in gold. We'll use that to arm the ship with heavy guns. Then we'll turn free rovers and make a million more on our own account."

"Good! Are you sure all the men except the boatswain are with us?"

"Perfectly. I've talked them all over. They're to be depended on."

Our hero listened to this conversation with feelings which may be better imagined than described. He did not recognize the voices of the men, but that they were better educated than the other sailors he knew from their conversation. He must warn the officers at the earliest moment, that they might prepare for the attack which was certain to come in the third mate's watch, which would now be in two hours.

Much to his disgust, and alarm also, the men stayed near the boat an hour. He could not leave his place of concealment before they went away, for they would see him and perceive that he had overheard their conversation. He must wait patiently until they went away.

At last, when he was almost discouraged, he heard them say:

"Come. It wants but an hour of the time. We must prepare the crew for the work that is before them."

Then he heard their receding footsteps on the deck as they went towards the forecastle.

Lifting a corner of the canvas cover, he looked out. Several of the crew were lolling lazily around the forecastle, and two men, whom he took to be the conspirators, although, in the dim light, he could not recognize them, were descending into the forecastle. No one was looking towards him, and he left the boat and descended to the deck and made his way quickly to the cabin.

The officers, with the exception of the second mate, whose watch it was on deck, were in the cabin.

Charlie at once, quietly, and not allowing himself to be carried away by his excitement, told what he had overheard.

The officers were thunderstruck. This was the first intimation they had received that a mutiny was ever contemplated.

"I know the scoundrels," said Captain Inman. "They're Sykes and Bloodgood. They're both men of some education, and I've often wondered how it was that they choose to be common sailors. Now, what's to be done to fool them?"

"I propose we arrest them at once," said the third mate.

"A good plan, if the mutiny has not progressed too far for that," said the captain. "If we could only catch the two ringleaders away from the rest of the crew, it would be easy."

"I'll go and see, sir," said Charlie.

"Are you not afraid?"

"Oh, no. They haven't an idea that we know anything about their plans."

"Well, go, then."

Our hero ascended to the deck and looked forward. A single glance told him that the arrest of the two ringleaders was out of the question. They were standing by the windlass, surrounded by all the crew who were off duty, talking to them in a low tone.

He went back to the cabin and reported.

"The boatswain isn't with them," he said. "He must be below. It would be too bad to allow him to fall into the hands of the mutineers. Besides, we need him. I'll go and tell him, Captain Inman, if you'll allow me."

"I should like to have him with us," said the captain. "But I am afraid you'll run into danger, Charlie."

"I think not, sir. They'll not suspect anything."

"Well, you may go, then. But be careful."

Without delaying a moment, our hero went to the deck, and walked steadily towards the group at the windlass, in the midst of which still stood the two ringleaders.

One of them came forward and confronted him.

"Where are you going, boy?" he growled.

"Down below," Charlie answered, quietly.

"What for?"

"To see Mills."

"The boatswain?"

"Yes."

"What do you want to see him for?"

"The captain wants to see him."

"What for?"

"How should I know? I don't know what the captain wants of every sailor he sends for. He wants to see the boatswain, and I'm not in the habit of asking questions. Maybe he'll tell you if you go and ask him."

"Better keep a civil tongue in your head, youngster."

"I intend to," said our hero, coolly.

With this, he stepped aside and passed on quickly to the ladder.

The fellow did not attempt to detain him, but muttered something about "clipping his wings before long," which sentence did not escape our hero's hearing.

He found the boatswain in his bunk. It required only an instant to communicate to him his knowledge of the mutiny, and Mills was ready for action in another moment.

Their passage to the cabin was not interrupted, and they found the officers and Mr. Chambers engaged in consultation.

"We haven't arrived at any conclusion, yet," said the captain, as they entered. "What can you say about it, Mills?"

"Well, sir," said the boatswain, modestly, "I don't know as my opinion's of any vally, but I know what I'd do if I had command o' this here craft."

"What would you do?"

"Well, ye see, sir, as them men's big an' strong an' able-bodied, an' that's four times as many of 'em as that is of us. What I propose is to build a barricade behind the door, so it can't open more

than far enough to admit one person at a time. When they come, it'll be with a rush. The third mate can slip inside, an' we can plug 'em. That'll thin 'em out some, anyhow, and give us less odds to contend against."

This plan was adopted as the best that offered.

It was now time to change the watch, and the third mate was provided with a pistol and sent to the deck with instructions to keep near the cabin door, and the instant he saw the men advancing to rush within and warn them.

The second officer, who had been on deck, was then informed of the position of affairs, and the whole party were armed with such weapons as were at hand.

Then they waited for the attack.

A strong barricade had been built behind the door, which would not open farther than just sufficiently to admit one man at a time.

They paused several minutes in anxiety.

Presently the third mate entered.

"Be ready," he whispered. "They're coming. Every man except the one at the wheel has left his duty. They're coming aft in a body. They'll be here in half a minute more."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONFLICT.

"HAVE your weapons ready," whispered the captain. "We must give them a surprise. Fire right into the body of 'em."

Every man of the little party made ready, each determined to do his duty, for they knew that on their courage depended their lives. If they faltered but a moment, they were gone.

On came the mutineers, slowly, stealthily; and presently, Charlie, who was looking through the crevice, saw that they were consulting together near the corner of the cabin, although they spoke so low that he could not understand their conversation.

This consultation lasted but a moment, and they moved on again, straight for the cabin door.

They were armed with knives and handspikes, but they did not appear to have firearms. At least, none were displayed.

"Here they come," whispered our hero, "be ready; they're almost here."

"I see them," said the captain, in a low voice. "They're not bunched up much. Aim low, and be cool, or you'll miss them."

The mutineers were now within five feet of the door, and when they saw that it was partially open, and that all was dark within, they paused in suspicion.

"Now is the time," whispered the captain.

"Fire!"

At the word the combined reports broke out on the air. The smoke filled the cabin. A yell of surprise and consternation broke from the throats of the mutineers, and two, with a yell of agony, fell down upon the deck, where they lay still and silent.

They were dead!

The fire from behind the ambuscade had been effectual.

Another of the mutineers uttered a groan of pain. A ball had struck his right arm and disabled it. Three of the crew were beyond doing further damage.

The effect upon the mutineers was demoralizing.

"Furies!" cried Bloodgood. "We have been betrayed. Back out of range before they fire again!"

With a yell of rage the crew sprang backward, dragging the two dead bodies.

Those in the cabin breathed freer.

"Why not complete the victory?" said Mr. Chambers, hastily. "Why not advance upon them, now that they are demoralized?"

"No, no!" said Mills. "That would be only throwing ourselves into their power. They outnumber us three to one. If we should go out they would seize us in a minute. Our only plan is to keep behind the barricade and watch a chance to take 'em by surprise."

This was assented to, for all saw the folly of attacking the mutineers openly, without cover.

For a long time there was perfect silence. Charlie, looking through the crevice, saw the helmsman at his post, apparently unconcerned, as well he might be, for he well knew that there was no danger that the party in the cabin would interfere with him, and so prevent the proper management of the ship.

The silence became burdensome to the little party within the cabin. It portended evil. If they were kept informed of the plans of the crew, they might be able to thwart them. But if the crew were allowed to mature their plans and spring their trap suddenly, it would go hard with them.

The captain's brow was clouded. Charlie saw it, and knew the cause.

"I will creep out and discover what they are doing," he said.

"No, no!" said Mills. "They'd nab ye, sartain, boy. They're on the lookout, depend on't."

"It's dark," said Charlie. "I can crouch in the shadow of the cabin, out of sight."

"It is important that we should know their movements," said the captain. "And yet I hardly like to have you run the risk, Charlie."

"I'll go," said Mills.

"No," said Charlie. "They'd be certain to see you, Mills. You're large, while I'm so small that I can crouch behind any small object and hide myself."

"That's true," said the captain.

"Then I may go?"

The captain nodded, and our hero looked out through the half-open door upon the man at the wheel. He was looking seaward, paying no attention just then to the cabin, and the boy slipped quickly out upon the deck.

He crept around the cabin in the shadow and peered past the corner into the gloom.

Only one man was visible, and he was standing at the opposite corner of the cabin, peering over it toward the door.

Not a single one of the crew except this man and the sailor at the wheel was visible.

This knowledge disturbed our hero. Where were they? They must be down below, and their presence in the hold meant mischief.

He determined to find out what they were doing.

Crouching down low to the deck, he crept in the shadow until he reached the bulwarks. Then, stealthily, keeping his eyes fixed steadily on the man at the corner of the cabin, that he might be ready to retreat quickly back behind the barricade, he crept along. He made his way undiscovered to a point opposite the mainmast. Then he wormed himself across the deck until he reached the mast and stood there beside it.

As he stood hidden from the sight of the man at the wheel behind the mast, he saw that the hatch was open. He threw himself down upon the deck and crept forward.

Looking down he beheld standing in a group beneath the whole of the crew, gathered around the two ringleaders, whose voices could be faintly heard.

Still they were not speaking in tones loud enough to be understood, and our hero's listening availed him nothing.

A bright idea entered his mind.

Now that the crew were all in the hold, why could not he inform the party in the cabin of the fact so that they could rush out and replace the hatchet and thus confine the mutineers below?

He determined to act upon the thought.

He left the hatchway and crept again toward the mast, from which, watching his opportunity when the man at the wheel was looking seaward, he crept to the bulwark and along it toward the cabin.

The greater part of the distance he accomplished unmolested, but just as he was congratulating himself upon his safety, he felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder, and a voice growled:

"S'pose you stop a bit, youngster."

At the same time he was grasped forcibly by the collar and lifted to his feet.

Our hero drew his pistol quick as lightning, but he was not permitted to fire, for the sailor grasped his arm, and by his superior strength held it as though in a vise.

"That's just what I want," he growled, in an oath.

But Charlie was too quick for him. He could not fire his arm, but his hand was pressed over the bulwarks by the sailor, and the pistol was suspended over the sea.

Nothing was easier than to drop it.

In an instant the pistol was speeding toward the bottom of the sea.

The sailor uttered an exclamation of rage and disappointment.

"I'll throw you after it!" he cried.

He loosed his hold on Charlie's waistband to throw him into the sea, but the boy's extraordinary agility again saved him.

Quick as a flash, as soon as the hold on his shoulder was loosened, he sprang away and ran.

He could not gain the cabin, for the man was between him and it, and he sprang toward the main shrouds.

The man, with a yell, sprang after him, but the spring which our hero made had given him the start, and almost before the sailor recovered from his surprise he had reached the shrouds.

From the bulwark he grasped a heavy belaying-pin and then, with the agility of a monkey, he mounted upward toward the cross-trees.

The noise had attracted the attention of those

who were in the hold, and they now came rushing out upon the deck.

"After him!" cried Peterson. "Don't let the brat escape!"

The sailor pursued Charlie up the shrouds and another sprang up on the other side of the mast.

Our hero thought that hope was gone. He must be captured, and he knew that in the present frame of mind of the mutineers, he would be thrown into the sea.

Up he clambered until the cross-trees were reached; the sailors, one on each side of the mast, were close upon him. He could not stop them, and mounting still higher he climbed out upon a yard.

Then came a sudden gust of wind. The ship lurched heavily.

He was looking back upon the sailors who were after him, and his hold was not good.

The sudden jerk threw him from the yard, and he fell downward into the sea.

The ship was going at a rapid rate, and the men rushed to the side and looked over.

He did not rise.

"Aha!" cried Peterson, the ringleader, "that is the last of you!"

CHAPTER XIII.

ADRIFT AT SEA.

WHEN our hero fell from the yard he expected nothing less than instant death. He expected to be dashed to pieces against the deck, and he clutched wildly at the rigging as he descended.

He could not grasp it, however, and missing the side of the ship narrowly, he fell into the sea.

When he arose to the surface he saw a long, narrow object gliding over him.

It was a rope which had been left hanging over the quarter. He grasped it instinctively and felt himself dragged through the water at a rapid rate.

The sensation was not unpleasant, for the water was warm, and he was hidden from the sight of the mutineers.

Presently, however, the strain upon his arms, as he clung to the rope, began to tell on him. He was growing very weary, and felt that he could not much longer endure the strain upon his muscles.

If he released his hold of the rope he would be drowned in the sea, for he could not hope to keep afloat a great while.

Nothing remained, then, but to climb the rope and reach the deck.

This would mean death also, for he would surely be seen by the man at the wheel, who would capture him, and his fate would be sealed, for he could expect no mercy from the mutineers. Still, there was just a chance remaining that he could gain the deck unseen.

This offered at least a hope of life, and he determined to risk it.

He turned his body around in the water for the purpose of mounting the rope.

As he did so, he saw a long black object following the ship.

It was only a little distance behind and seemed to be annexed to the ship by a rope.

He recognized it.

It was the ship's yawl.

A gleam of hope passed over him. He could conceal himself there. The yawl was in a direct line with him. He released his hold of the rope instantly, and as the yawl passed him, grasped the gunwale.

A moment later he had drawn himself cautiously over the side and lay extended in the bottom of the boat.

No one had seen him, for he heard no cries or commotion in the ship, which, had he been perceived, would certainly have been the case.

He lay there very quietly, trying to determine what should be his next move.

He had been lying thus as hour, he thought, when he heard a great commotion on the ship. There were curses and yells.

Clouds had loomed up, and it was very dark, and he could not see an object on board the ship, although he arose from the bottom of the boat and peered anxiously through the darkness.

There was no danger now of his being seen, for the boat could not be visible to an observer on board the ship.

The sounds continued.

Presently they died away.

The conflict had ended. But how?

Had the little party in the cabin been overpowered?

Had they all been slain?

The suspense to the boy was unendurable, and he thought seriously of drawing the boat up to the ship's side and climbing on board, taking his chances that the party in the cabin had conquered.

Before he could put his resolution in practice a sound arose which caused him to grow pale as death.

It was a heart-rending shriek, uttered by a woman.

"Back! back, you villains!" a female voice exclaimed. "Touch me not, murderers!"

Then he heard a curse, loud and grating, and a voice, which he recognized as that of Bloodgood, one of the leaders of the mutineers, exclaim:

"We'll see about that, my beauty. You belong to us now, and require training."

Then he heard a sound, like a person retreating rapidly and others pressing, and the woman's voice again rang out clearly:

"Hold!" it cried. "Advance but one step nearer and I spring into the sea."

A derisive laugh was the only answer, and he heard the men rush forward.

There was a sound as of a body rushing through the air, and a heavy splash as it fell into the sea.

Charlie shuddered.

He knew that it was Mrs. Chambers who had thus voluntarily given up her life rather than surrender to the mutineers.

Our hero leaned over the side of the boat, hoping to grasp the clothing as she passed.

He was just in time.

As he leaned with his face down to the water's edge he saw the white dress.

He clutched it, and with great difficulty drew Mrs. Chambers over the side and into the boat.

She did not move or speak as he laid her down, but as he placed his hand over her heart he felt it beating faintly. In a little while she opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"Hush!" whispered Charlie. "We are in the ship's yawl. Don't speak above a whisper, or they'll hear us."

"Is it you, Charlie? We thought you dead."

"This boat saved me as it has saved you. How are matters on the ship?"

"Horrible," murmured Mrs. Chambers, shuddering. "They broke through upon us. One of the officers is dead; the others are wounded and captured."

"And Mr. Chambers?"

"Dead, I fear. Oh, Charlie, I saw the wretches strike him down with a heavy iron weapon."

Charlie shuddered.

"This is terrible!" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Chambers buried her face in her hands and commenced crying and moaning piteously.

"This will not do," said our hero, positively.

"We must do something for our own safety."

"Oh, Charlie! I don't care to live, now that my husband is gone."

"You must live. You must not give way."

"But how can we escape?"

"I'll show you."

He arose, and opening the blade of his knife, advanced to the bow.

Leaning over, he cut the rope.

The cable parted. The motion of the boat being towed swiftly through the water, ceased.

They were adrift in an open boat upon the ocean.

CHAPTER XIV.

THIRST.

ADRIFT at night in an open boat upon the sea!

For a moment after the rope was cut, and their connection with the ship severed, the two sat quiet and looked into each other's faces.

The ship passed swiftly onward, and the large dark hull which had loomed up in the darkness soon disappeared.

Then Charlie aroused himself.

"Now let's see what the boat contains," he said, cheerfully. "First I'll see if there's any provisions."

There was a small locker arranged in the stern, and into this our hero dried and examined it.

"There's nothing here," he said, in a disappointed tone. "Not so much as would keep a mouse alive a day. Well, we'll have to make land the sooner, that's all. Now let's find out what there is in the boat to paddle her through the water."

This was easily ascertained.

There were two oars and a leg-of-mutton sail.

"Good!" said Charlie. "As long as this breeze holds, we'll not have to do much work. I'll set sail at once."

The sail was fastened around the mast, and Charlie carried the whole concern to the front seat, through which was a hole leading to the step below in the keel of the yawl.

He stepped to the mast and unwound the sheet-rope which was wound around the sail to hold it in its place.

Then, making fast the sheet-rope to the gun-

wale, he seized one of the long oars—for there was no rudder to steer with.

"Now we're off," he cried, gayly.

The boat cut through the water merrily.

"Do you know where we are, Charlie?" asked Mrs. Chambers.

"No," answered our hero.

"Then you don't know in which direction to steer?"

"Not exactly. But you remember the island we passed two days ago?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going to shape my course as near as I can tell towards that. If this wind holds, we ought to make it in two days."

morning dawned he looked anxiously backward to see if the ship was in sight.

It was not. Not a single object relieved the waste of water.

The sun came up like a great round ball of fire, and its first beams awoke Mrs. Chambers.

She arose at once.

"How long have I slept?" she said. "You are sadly in need of rest, Charlie. Show me how to steer and take my place."

As she had said, our hero was sadly in need of rest, and he knew that he must steer again that night, and that he must sleep before that. He must trust the management of the boat in the hands of Mrs. Chambers.

They gazed longingly overhead into the heavens. There was no hope there.

The sky was cloudless.

There were no indications that could afford them hope of rain.

Charlie, growing weak through suffering, again lay down in the bottom of the boat on top of the old sail.

He could not sleep. He tossed to and fro on the rude couch restlessly.

Presently he arose.

"I cannot lie there and sleep," he whispered hoarsely. "Give me the steering oar."

"No, no," said Mrs. Chambers, feebly. "You have done your share. Try and rest."



SEA-DOG CHARLIE.—He raised the knife high above his head, and brought it down with all his strength.

"Why, that's as quick as the ship sailed it, Charlie?"

"I know that, but the ship had no wind the first day, you know. You'd better lie down and try to get some rest, Mrs. Chambers."

"Oh, Charlie, I cannot sleep while my husband is lying dead."

"It may not be so bad as that," said the boy. "The blow may only have stunned him."

"But the crew will murder them all."

"I hope not. Let us imagine the best. At any rate, you need rest. You will have to steer, you know, while I sleep, to-morrow."

There was an old sail in the boat, and this our hero spread out in the bottom of the craft, and the lady lay down upon it.

All was perfectly silent, except the moaning of the wind across the sea and the ripple of the waves against the side, and despite her misery, Mrs. Chambers, worn out with trouble and anxiety, soon slept.

Hour after hour did our young hero sit in the stern of the boat, motionless, holding the steering oar, and directing his course by a star which he had taken as his guide when they first set sail.

His mind was very much troubled, for he knew the chances were ten to one against his making the island.

He might be steering far out of his course, and even if nearly in the right direction it might be passed in the night.

Even if they were steering exactly right, and the wind held fair, they must pass two days at least without food or water, and at that time their sufferings must necessarily be very great.

All that night the boy sat there, and when the

He gave her explicit directions how to steer—which was not so hard a matter after all, for they were going before the wind—and then lay down.

In a moment he was sleeping soundly.

When he awoke it was long past noon.

He was much refreshed, and he took his place again at the steering oar.

The pangs of thirst now began to press them sorely.

It had grown very hot, and sailing as they were before the wind, much of the cooling power of the wind was lost upon them.

Their lips grew parched and swollen, and Charlie could see that his companion, accustomed as she was to every luxury, was suffering very much.

Still, neither mentioned their sufferings to each other, and when night came our hero again took a star for his guide, while his companion again lay down to sleep and forgot, if possible, the agony of thirst.

It seemed to him as though the night would never end; as if each moment was lengthened out to an eternity, and hours before the sun arose he thought that daybreak must be near, for it seemed to him that hours sufficient to constitute days must already have passed since the sun went down.

At length day came again, and his companion arose with a pale and haggard face. Sleep had not refreshed her.

The pangs of hunger, as well as thirst, now assailed them both.

It was terrible.

Their throats were so dry and parched that they could not speak except in whispers.

"I cannot. I am burning up."

"And I."

"We must try and bear it this day and night. We may make land to-morrow."

"God grant it!"

After that they did not talk much, for every word caused them pain; but sat still, looking at each other and at the sea.

The sight of the water seemed a mockery. There was water all around them—water everywhere—yet they had not a single drop to drink.

There was a cup in the bottom of the boat which had been used for the purpose of bailing, and Mrs. Chambers presently reached down and took it up.

She was sitting by the side of the boat, and before Charlie could prevent her she dipped the cup into the sea and raised it to her lips.

With an exclamation of alarm Charlie sprang forward quickly and dashed the vessel from her lips.

She looked up at him piteously.

"Let me drink," she moaned. "It will assuage my thirst for a little while."

But Charlie, knowing the terrible consequence which must ensue if she drank the salt water, threw the cup into the sea.

Now, more than ever, he recognized the necessity of keeping awake, and so all that day the brave boy kept at his post and looked, with eyes that burned so that he could hardly see, for land.

But no land came in sight, and the night closed in around them dark and gloomy.

Neither slept that night. They sat silent, consumed with thirst and hunger.

Morning came, and as the light crept slow-

over the sea the boy looked anxiously for land. Looked anxiously, for he well knew that his companion could not endure the miseries of another night in the open boat upon the sea.

As the sun came up and he could look far away across the ocean, a cry of joy escaped him.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "We are saved!"

Far away across the water, where the horizon seemed to touch the sea, arose a low, dark line.

Was it land, or a cloud merely?

In agonized suspense they waited, as the yawl shot swiftly through the waves.

At length there could be no doubt.

It was land, for they could dimly distinguish rocks and trees.

But now a new trial awaited them.

The wind, which had hitherto held good, now died away completely, leaving not even a ripple on the water, and the sea rose and fell in a long, unbroken swell.

"What shall we do now?" said Charlie, looking at his companion, hopelessly. "Here we are in sight of land and not a capful of wind to carry us ashore."

His companion, although very weak, aroused at once as the boy gave way.

"We will row ashore, Charlie," she said.

"Row! I wish we could; but I can only handle one of these heavy oars, and that would turn the yawl around in a circle."

"I can row."

"You! You are too weak."

"I have become strong since I saw the land." And indeed it did seem so, for instead of the weak, dejected woman of an hour ago, she was now all fire and animation.

She took up one of the heavy oars, rested it in the rowlock, and commenced pulling.

Our hero did the same, and the boat was propelled slowly toward the land.

It was a very long journey, and they were hours accomplishing it, so that it was noon and the sun was shining down vertically upon them, terribly hot, as they entered the mouth of a small creek that ran up into the land.

Our hero selected a place where the beach was low and the landing not difficult, and they ran the boat ashore there, and with a cry of thankfulness they sprang out upon the shore.

They were safe from the perils of the sea, but would they not meet danger as great on the land?

As Mrs. Chambers stepped from the boat upon the shore, her strength deserted her and she sank down.

"Water," she murmured. "Fresh water to drink or I shall die!"

Our hero ran to a little grove which he espied near by. There was a little spring there of beautiful clear water.

He led his companion to it, and throwing themselves down beside it, both drank to their hearts' content.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SNAKE.

Oh, how the water refreshed them! and when they were satisfied they arose from the spring and returned their thanks to Him who had guided them hither safely.

But they were very hungry. They were weak from want of food, and now that the tormenting thirst was quenched, they felt the gnawings of hunger terribly.

Charlie saw the mute appeal in the eyes of his companion, and he knew what the look meant.

"You are starving," he said.

"I am very hungry," she answered, feebly. "And you, Charlie, must be also."

"I'm a little hungry," he answered, cheerfully. "Come, let's go inland and see if we can't find some fruit."

He led the way through the little grove into the thick wood beyond.

Here they found fruit of all kinds in abundance, and upon the fragrant oranges and luscious grapes they made their repast.

"Now we'll go to the beach," he said, "and find some shell-fish."

This was an easy task, for there were many on the shore, and our hero carried them back into the grove, gathered some dry sticks and struck a match, of which he had several in his pocket.

He soon had a brisk fire going, and the shell-fish, having been prepared by his companion, were cooked and eaten.

"Now all we want to make us all right again is some sleep," said our hero. "After that we'll determine what's best to do, as goodness only knows how long we'll be obliged to stay on this island before we're taken off."

Leaving Mrs. Chambers there, he walked to a different part of the grove and threw himself down on the ground beneath a tree.

In a moment he was sound asleep.

He was awakened by a peculiar feeling of unrest stealing over him.

Instead of the feeling of relief and contentment which he had experienced when he went to sleep, a sensation of dread came upon him.

He tried to throw the feeling off; he could not; it seemed to him that some great evil was near.

He experienced a desire to open his eyes; to move. He could not. Some invisible power held him motionless.

He experienced a feeling of suffocation—a feeling as though some invisible object, over which he had no control, had power to exhaust the air around him.

By the increased sense of suffocation which he experienced, he knew that the object was drawing near, and he knew also—although he could not see—that it was swaying to and fro, with the vibratory motion of the pendulum.

Was it possible that the object, whatever it was, possessed the power of communicating electricity?

Did it possess the power of a mesmerist?

Did it hold him in this state by an invisible, subtle thread of electricity which it kept constantly in motion between itself and him?

Although he knew not what the object was, yet he felt that he must cast off the spell which the thing had thrown around him at once, or it would be too late.

He summoned all his energies.

By the most violent effort of his will that, in all his life, he ever made, he succeeded in partially casting off the spell.

He opened his eyes.

He saw what the object was, and he knew that he was very near death; for, swaying to and fro, its hideous jaws unclosed, showing the poison-coated fangs, was one of the most deadly serpents that inhabit the forests of the southern islands.

The body of the monster was tightly wrapped about a limb of the tree above, and the head, swinging back and forth like the pendulum of a clock, was within five feet of his face.

The eyes were fierce and deadly.

They glittered as though fire was within them, and each instant seemed to throw more fire upon him—flame in which caloric did not enter, but which, as he felt it strike his face, rendered him still further incapable of resisting the terrible fascination of the hideous but beautiful eyes into which he looked, and from which he could not turn his glance away.

The jaws were unclosed to their utmost limit, and at times the tongue would dart like lightning from between the poison-coated fangs.

He was utterly overcome with horror. He could not move. He could not cry out. Now that he had succeeded in opening his eyes and fastening them upon the brilliant orbs of the monster, he could not remove them.

They were as firmly fixed as though a bar of steel secured them.

They followed the slow vibration of the monster from side to side, never stopping, never ceasing—followed it to and fro without power to resist, and he knew that when the hideous head, which each instant approached nearer to his face, became stationary, that moment would be his last, for then the blow would come, and with it certain death.

The head approached nearer. Not two feet separated the fangs from his throat.

Suddenly the vibrating motion ceased. The monster became stationary. The neck curved slightly and the head was elevated.

The reptile was preparing to strike.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR HERO BUILDS A CASTLE-DANGER.

I CANNOT describe the feelings of our hero as he lay, without power to move, beneath the head of the snake, which, at each vibration, approached nearer to his face.

He tried to calculate, even in the intensity of his fear, how long a time would be given to him to live. How long before the tongue, as it shot forth, would lick his face.

The thought brought increased horror, and still he could not shudder, for the act would have required motion, which, held as he was, immovable, by the strange fascination of those terrible eyes, he could not make.

Oh, how hard he tried to move!

His whole physical force, his whole soul, were put forth in that one endeavor.

In vain!

He was held as firmly by the power of the monster as if bands of iron bound him.

Oh, how he prayed that he might cast off the terrible spell!

How he prayed that the blow might be struck quickly, if he struck it must, and relieve him from that agony which was worse than death.

He strove with all his might to speak, to cry

out; he could not. The same power that held his limbs immovable confined his lips.

He could not move them. He could not utter the slightest sound. He was dumb.

He knew, as well as any human being can know of his approaching dissolution, that he must die.

He could not look calmly in the face of such a dreadful death.

He knew that the serpent would strike in an instant more, and he tried to close his eyes, that he might not see his death so plainly.

He could not do it.

He had no power to remove his gaze from the hideous features which, it seemed to him, looked mockingly into his.

He must look into the face of the thing which was to cause his death.

Suddenly the eyes changed their expression. They became soft and beautiful, and he wondered, even in his peril, how a thing with eyes so soft could strike him dead.

Their expression changed again.

They became red as blood.

They were glazed with a crimson substance. The head was elevated farther, and the fangs exposed still more.

He knew that his time had come.

He experienced a sense of faintness. Objects grew indistinct before him; yet through the mist he could distinguish those terrible eyes, hideous now in their ferocity, fixed upon him.

With his eyes fixed upon those of his destroyer, he must meet his death.

A hissing sound escaped from the monster's mouth. He saw the head dart forward.

He heard a loud report, proceeding from a point almost beside him.

The sound broke the spell that bound him.

In an instant he sat upright.

He saw the writhing body of the snake suspended from the branch above him. Its head was shattered. He knew that he was saved.

He had experienced a certainty of death. He had been within the grave. He had emerged from the valley of the shadow of death.

The revulsion of feeling was too great. He could not bear it. He lost consciousness.

When consciousness returned, his head rested on the knee of Mrs. Chambers, who was crying over him. A pistol lay on the ground beside her.

He sat up.

"I am all right now," he said, bravely.

Then, as his glance fell on the still writhing body of the serpent, he shuddered.

"Did you do it?" he asked.

"Certainly," she said; "who else? When I awoke I wandered on in this direction. I saw you before I saw the snake, which was partially hidden by the foliage. I was about going up to you to speak to you, when I noticed your peculiar actions. Your eyes were wide open, staring straight ahead, and yet you seemed to be asleep. Your face was colorless, and you seemed possessed by some feeling of utter horror and loathing."

"I did feel it," said Charlie, shuddering.

"Then I saw the snake," she continued. "I was dreadfully startled, and felt the desire to run away."

"If you had, it would have been all over with me," said our hero.

"Yes; and I realized that in an instant. I knew that something must be done at once, or the snake would strike. The pistol with which I had been furnished before the attack of the mutineers was in my pocket. It was wet by my spring overboard into the sea, but the cartridges were of copper, and I did not think they were injured. At any rate I must risk it. My hand trembled so that, although I was within ten feet of the snake, I was afraid I should not hit him."

"By a great effort I controlled myself, took steady aim, and fired. Providence directed my hand. The bullet shattered the snake's head."

"And saved my life," said Charlie, gratefully. "How can I ever repay you?"

"You have more than paid me, my boy. Let us say no more about it, but think how we are to pass the night, so as to be safe."

With that Charlie arose and went back to the yawl and procured the hatchet.

With this he cut a great many bushes and small branches.

"Now we'll build a house," he said, when a large pile had been gathered.

He cut several large stakes, which he drove into the ground, and covered the whole affair thickly with brush.

Then he went back to the boat and procured the sail, which he spread over the top.

"There!" he exclaimed, with an air of satisfaction, when all was completed. "That'll keep the rain and dew out, if nothing else."

"But what are you going to do, Charlie?"

"I'll build a little crib large enough for me to creep under, by the side of yours, and draw a

corner of the sail under it to keep the rain off. See?"

"Yes. But your quarters will be rather contracted, will they not, Charlie?"

"Oh, they'll be large enough. I'll only be there to sleep, you know."

He gathered more brush and stakes and made a small addition.

"There, our castle's finished," he said.

It was growing dark when all was finished, and our hero was tired out.

"We'd better go to bed and get a good night's sleep," he said. "We'll have a great deal to do to-morrow, and will need to be fresh to do it."

This suggestion was acted on.

Mrs. Chambers retired into her hut and our hero crept under his brush.

He slept soundly until daylight, when he arose refreshed.

He walked to the shore.

A vessel was in the offing.

Her hull was not visible. As he came near and the hull arose to view, an exclamation of dismay escaped him.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "It is the *Falcon*. The mutineers are bringing her back to this island. What will become of us?"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MUTINEERS AGAIN.

HE ran back from the shore and hid himself in the bushes, and watched the ship long enough to be sure that she was really coming to the island.

When he was satisfied of this he ran quickly back to the brush house.

Mrs. Chambers had risen and was in front of it.

"What is it, Charlie?" she asked, noticing the boy's agitation. "What has happened?"

Charlie knew it would be of no use to attempt concealment.

"The ship is coming to the island," he said.

"What! the *Falcon*?"

"Yes."

"What shall we do? If the mutineers discover us they will kill us."

"We must keep out of the way."

"But they will find the boat and this hut and know that you are here."

"I can fix that, I think. I'll go at once, before the crew lands, and take the yawl further up the creek."

He hurried down to the creek and entered the yawl, which was hidden from the sea by a projecting head-land.

He pushed the boat up the creek until he came to a place where the bushes grew in a dense mass and overhung the stream.

This was as good a place as would offer for concealment, he thought, and he drew the boat in along the bank under the bushes.

It was entirely concealed and would be safe, unless the mutineers chanced to discover it by accident, and our hero returned to the bush house, where he found his companion already engaged demolishing the hut.

This was soon completed, and the branches scattered about over a large space underneath the trees.

"There!" he exclaimed, with an air of satisfaction. "If they notice that the branches have been cut by a hatchet, they'll think the island is inhabited by savages and that they have done it. That will hurry them away, or I'm mistaken."

"What shall we do now?"

"You stay here while I go and see where the ship is."

"Please don't expose yourself. If they see you they will search for us all over the island and hunt us down. Perhaps they saw you on the beach through their glasses."

"Oh, no, I guess not. We must not borrow trouble."

With that our hero went away, leaving his companion in the grove.

He went to the edge of the timber, and, hidden by the trees, looked out across the beach upon the sea.

The ship was closer in than he imagined. Indeed, she was just casting anchor off the mouth of the creek, within two hundred yards of the shore.

As he looked, a boat was lowered and manned, and rowed towards the shore.

Our hero had seen enough. He knew positively that they were coming ashore now, and he hastened back to his companion.

"Come," he said, hurriedly. "We must go. They are coming."

"Go where, Charlie?"

"Out into the thick wood and hide. They can never find us there."

He led the way out of the grove across the open space that separated it from the wood, and entered the forest.

It was hard work making their way through dense, almost impenetrable thickets, and they were both torn and bleeding before they had gone far enough into the wood to consider themselves safe. They had come to a little open place, and here they stopped to rest.

"That will do, I think," said our hero; "we'll be safe here, I guess."

They sat here for an hour, conversing little. At length our hero started up.

"I'm going back," he said.

"Going back!" exclaimed Mrs. Chambers, in alarm. "Oh, no, Charlie, you must not do that. Suppose they should see you?"

"I'll take good care they'll not do that. Besides, I want to know what brought them here. Perhaps I can get near enough to hear what they are saying."

"But what good will that be, Charlie?"

"I'll tell you. Perhaps some of the officers, or Mr. Chambers, are still alive, and I can find out what they mean to do with them."

"Oh, if my husband were only living!" sighed Mrs. Chambers. "But no; that cannot be. I saw him struck down myself."

"But the blow might not have been fatal."

Her face lighted up with hope.

"I'll be back in a short time," said Charlie. "If you hear any one approaching, leave the glade and run back to the thicket."

Bidding her good-bye, our hero turned and retraced his steps cautiously the way they had come.

When he was near the glade he crept on his hands and knees, parting the bushes carefully, so that not the least sound of his progress could be heard.

At last he reached the thicket at the edge of the wood, and putting aside the leaves gently he peered through.

The mutineers were there, but at a point somewhat further down.

Bloodgood, one of the leaders, was in the center, and all the others were in a ring around him.

They were conversing earnestly, and there seemed to be a dispute about something.

Occasionally Bloodgood, who did most of the talking, would gesticulate earnestly and arise upon his feet, only to resume his seat again upon the ground as soon as the heat of his argument had in a measure passed away.

They were a bloodthirsty, desperate-looking set of men, and our hero, as he crouched in the bushes watching them, thought that his case would be desperate should he be unfortunate enough to fall into their hands.

From their animated manner he knew that their conversation was of some importance. Perhaps they were discussing their future plans.

He determined to run the risk of being discovered by going near enough to overhear their conversation.

Like a gliding serpent he wormed his way along through the underbrush. He was within ten feet of the mutineers when a dry stick beneath him snapped.

"Hark!" said one of the men.

Charlie lay quiet.

"It was nothing," said another.

At that instant a small, harmless animal ran out of the bushes in front of the mutineers.

"That explains it," said Bloodgood.

Their fears dispelled, the mutineers again commenced their conversation, and our hero listened eagerly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MUTINEERS DISCOVER OUR HERO.

"I TELL you there's no one on the island," exclaimed Bloodgood angrily.

"And I tell you there is," said one of the men. "You might as well tell me that I've got no eyes. What I see I know. I saw that boy through the glass as plain as I see you now."

"How do you know it was the boy?"

"How do I know anything?"

"But you couldn't distinguish one person from another at that distance."

"Well, suppose I couldn't. There's no savages on this island, and it must have been the boy."

"I don't believe you saw anybody."

"You don't? Well, look here, then."

He held up, as he spoke, one of the branches which Charlie had cut from a tree.

"What d'ye think o' that? Do you think I didn't see somebody now? Who did that, then?"

This question was a poser. Bloodgood took the branch from the man and examined it. It was plain that it had been cut within a few hours, and some one must have been there to cut it.

"Now say I didn't see anybody," growled the man.

"The boy must have been ashore here," said

Bloodgood. "We can't bring the men ashore and tie 'em to trees to starve to death without finding the boy. He'd set 'em free in an hour after we left. Besides the boy must have the boat, and they'd get off the island. We must find the young rascal and the boat."

"Let's get at it at once, then."

"Yes. The sooner the better."

"Hadn't we better separate, and part search the creek for the yawl and the rest go into the interior?"

"Yes. That will be the best way. Two of you go up the creek and around the coast looking for the yawl. The rest of us will scatter through the interior. There's no danger, for the boy's got no pistol."

"Don't be too sure of that," murmured Charlie. "If you come too near you may find out to your disgust."

He tapped the stock of Mrs. Chambers' pistol as he spoke.

"I'd better be going," he muttered. "They'll be up in a minute."

He backed his way out easily through the underbrush.

A dry stick snapped beneath him with a loud report.

He heard a cry from the mutineers, and knew that he must fly for his life.

Quick as thought the crew dashed through the bushes toward him.

He sprang up hastily and dashed away.

His foot touched a round stick.

It rolled and threw him headlong.

Before he could recover himself one of the crew dashed forward and threw himself upon him.

"I've caught him!" he called to the others.

"Not much!" cried Charlie. "Take that!"

Bang.

Down went the fellow with a bullet in his shoulder, to the ground, where he lay howling.

Our hero sprang up and looked behind him. The mutineers were within twenty yards and coming like the wind.

"Halt!" cried Bloodgood.

In reply Charlie shouted out defiance and dashed away.

Bang—bang—bang!

Half a dozen reports.

The bullets whistled all around him, but did not break the skin.

"After him, men!" cried Bloodgood.

Away he went, and after him the mutineers; through the briars he led them, and when they struck the rascals' faces he heard curses loud and deep.

At last, when his garments were torn in shreds, he threw them off the scent for a time and leaned up against a tree exhausted and panting.

He had been running in a direction opposite to that where Mrs. Chambers was hidden, and now, after he had taken a little time to breathe, he must hurry back to her and explain the meaning of the shots, for he knew she must be terribly frightened, knowing that he had fallen into danger.

After resting a while he started back, making a long detour to avoid the mutineers, who he knew were still searching for him in the wood.

He found Mrs. Chambers sitting on the ground in an attitude of deep dejection.

Her face was buried in her hands.

As she looked up her face was very pale, and he could see she had been weeping.

She sprang up as he approached.

"Oh, Charlie!" she exclaimed. "Thank God you have returned. I thought they had killed you."

"There is not a mutineer on the island smart enough to do that," said Charlie, bravely. "They came pretty near it that time though."

"Did you hear anything about the officers of the ship and my husband, Charlie?"

"I heard that there are several of them alive on board the ship, although I don't know who they are. The mutineers are going to bring them on shore to-night, and tie them to trees to starve to death."

"Oh, horrible!"

"We'll stop that, though, if we can keep out of the clutches of the crew."

"Do you think they'll find us?"

"I hope not."

"Hark!"

There was a crashing through the underbrush, and two of the mutineers stepped out into the glade.

Charlie pressed through the bushes.

The men came on.

The boy drew his pistol.

His companion shuddered and closed her eyes.

Our hero set his teeth and pointed his pistol at the foremost of the advancing men.

CHAPTER XIX.

OUR HERO SWIMS TO THE SHIP.

HAD the man advanced a single step nearer, he would have sealed his death-warrant; but, fortunately for himself, he paused, and, after hesitating a moment, turned away in a different direction.

"Lucky for him," muttered our hero, as he lowered his pistol.

His companion shuddered, but said nothing.

All that day they sat in the thicket without food or drink, for Charlie, knowing that the mutineers were searching for him high and low, did not dare leave the shelter.

Several times the sailors passed them so close that he could almost have reached forward and touched them; but they were not discovered.

As it grew dark, Charlie said:

"I must go out and find something to eat and get some water. The mutineers have no doubt censured their search by this time, and the coast is clear."

"I am afraid something will happen to you, Charlie."

"There is no danger."

"So you said before."

"Well, I'll be more careful this time."

"Think of what will become of me, Charlie, if anything happens to you. Please be careful; don't run into danger."

"I'll be careful. Don't leave this place, no matter what happens."

She promised him this, and he went away.

He did not go to the grove this time, but directed his course to the river.

He reached it undiscovered, and groped silently along until he reached the place where he had concealed the yawl.

It was still there, and as he saw that it had not been discovered, he thought:

"What is to hinder us from taking the boat and escaping in the darkness?"

No sooner was the thought formed, however, than it was cast aside. They would unavoidably make some noise going down the river, which would doubtless be heard by the mutineers, who, no doubt, were on the watch.

Besides, even if they were not heard, where would they go?

They had no food in the boat, and to subject themselves to such trials as they had endured before, was not to be thought of for a moment.

Having given this point up, his next move was to discover where the mutineers were.

Cautiously making his way down the creek until he was opposite the grove, he descried a bright light.

It was a large fire, around which, stretched out in comfortable positions on the ground, a number of the crew were lying. The others were doubtless on the watch for him.

He was quite near enough, he thought, and he continued his way on down in the darkness toward the beach.

Looking off to sea he plainly saw the lights of the ship as she lay at anchor, not two hundred yards from shore.

"I wonder if I hadn't better go off to the ship?" he said to himself. "I can easily swim it, and perhaps I can help Mr. Chambers and the officers."

He pondered a moment before he decided.

"It'll be the most dangerous thing I've undertaken yet," he said; "but I'll go."

Sitting down on the beach he drew off his shoes and removed his hat and coat, and left them lying on the sand.

Then, wading out into the sea until it was beyond his depth, he struck out for the ship.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE SHIP'S HOLD.

It was with great difficulty that our hero made his way through the water out to sea.

There was not much wind, and the sea was smooth, it is true, but the current was setting in at the mouth of the creek and it was hard work making his way against it.

At length he struck off at right angles to the course he had been pursuing until he was beyond the center of the current, and then turned again toward the ship.

He found it was now easier swimming, and breasting the waves manfully, he soon found himself near the ship.

He could hear loud conversation on board the ship, mingled occasionally with horrid oaths. It was so dark that he had no fear of being seen, and he swam quietly to the bow-chains and rested upon them with his body half out of the water and his head in the air.

All the conversation seemed to come from a point near the cabin, and he had no doubt that the mutineers were gathered at that point, leaving the other parts of the ship deserted.

Cautiously climbing up, he reached the side and looked over.

No one was in sight.

"I've half a mind to explore the ship and see where the officers and Mr. Chambers are," he murmured. "I wonder where they've put them? In the hold, though, most likely."

Keeping a good lookout ahead, he climbed over the rail and descended to the deck.

As he made his way forward, hugging the rail closely, like a shadow, he could dimly see the mutineers gathered in a group near the cabin.

There were not more than half a dozen of them, the others being on shore.

Creeping along, still as death, he reached a position opposite the hatchway and paused to listen.

The revelry was still going on. They had not heard him, and throwing himself flat down on the deck, he wormed his way along until he reached the hatchway.

The hatch was off, and he leaned over and looked down.

It was dark as pitch below. He could not tell whether they of whom he was in search were there or not.

The only way to find out was by going down, and this he determined to do.

Very cautiously he descended.

He reached the foot of the ladder and again paused and listened.

Not a sound did he hear yet.

He commenced groping in the darkness.

Suddenly his foot encountered some obstacle, and he was thrown headlong.

"What are you about, you lubber?" cried a voice which he recognized as the captain's.

"Ain't ye content with tying us up like sheep ready for the slaughter without kicking us to pieces like that?"

It was the captain of the ship who spoke. He imagined that it was one of the mutineers who had stumbled over him, and the old sea-dog was not one to submit to such an indignity in silence.

"Oh!" whispered our hero. "It's I—Charlie. Talk low, or the crew will hear you."

"What? Is it you, Charlie?"

"Yes."

"We thought you were drowned. They told us you fell overboard from the yard."

"So I did, but I was lucky enough to grasp the yawl and climb aboard. Is Mr. Chambers alive?"

"Yes," issued a weak voice from the darkness. "I am alive, but I wish to God I were dead, now that my wife is dead."

"She is not dead. She's alive and well. I left her on the island."

"Alive! Oh, thank God!"

"How did you get here?" asked the first mate.

"Swam," said Charlie, quietly.

"Ah! Then we must be close under the shore."

"Not two hundred yards from the beach. The crew's there, all except six men they left to guard the ship."

"What are they doing, then?"

"They went ashore to look for a suitable place to tie you and leave you to starve; that's all."

"Great Heavens!"

"It is true. That is their plan. I overheard them, but we'll defeat them."

"How?"

"I'll release you."

"But we have no weapons?"

"You can jump overboard with me and swim ashore."

"No, no, we can't do that. The first mate is so badly wounded that he can't swim. Besides, we couldn't all leave the ship without detection; and even if we could, our escape would be discovered and they would search the island and kill us."

"But we could take to the yawl."

"There isn't breeze enough to carry us out of sight, if they look for us with the telescope."

"What's to be done, then?" asked Charlie, despairingly. "Wait a moment. Let me think."

There was silence for a moment and then the captain spoke again.

"We'll have to overpower the men on the ship," he said, "but we must first have the boat that the crew took ashore."

"Why so?" asked Mr. Chambers in astonishment.

"Because the crew ashore would hear the firing and hurry off. Before we could get the ship under way they would be here and overpower us. If we take the boat they can't get to us."

All felt the force of this reasoning.

"You must swim back, Charlie," continued the captain, "and manage to steal away the boat."

"I'll try, captain. But first I'll so loosen your cords that you can make battle if anything occurs to me."

Leaning over the captain he loosened his bonds and was about doing the same for the others when the captain said:

"Never mind that, Charlie. I'll do that myself. You go ashore now, for there's no telling how soon the scoundrels ashore may take a notion to come on board."

Without delay our hero groped his way along the ladder and up it to the deck.

Peering over the hatchway, he saw that the crew were still gathered in the same place where they had been when he went below.

Again he was fortunate enough to creep along the rail to the fore-chains without being observed.

Once there, his danger, so far as discovery was concerned, was over, and he dropped into the water and struck out boldly for the shore.

It was much easier going back than swimming out to the ship, and he entered the mouth of the creek in much less time than it had taken him to go out.

He did not land at the mouth of the creek, where he had entered the water on his outward trip, but continued on up it, part of the time wading and part swimming, until he came to the overhanging bushes where the yawl was concealed.

This, he knew, was opposite the place where Mrs. Chambers was hidden, and he had taken this course, in part, to avoid his enemies—upon whom he might have stumbled if he had gone by land—and partly because he was more certain of finding the place where his companion was concealed.

Taking a course at right angles to the creek, he soon came to the glade.

"Mrs. Chambers, are you there?" he whispered.

"Yes, yes!" was the reply. "Where have you been, Charlie? You have been gone so long. I have been almost wild with anxiety lest something had happened to you."

He crossed over to her.

"I've been out to the ship," he said. "See! I am all wet."

He felt her trembling, and he knew her thoughts. He knew that she was longing to ask about her husband, yet did not dare for fear that she would hear the worst.

"Mr. Chambers is all right," he said. "I saw him and spoke to him."

"Oh, Charlie!"

This was all she said, and he knew that she was crying softly in her joy.

"But now we must arouse ourselves," he said, presently. "They must be saved from the mutineers!"

"But how?"

Charlie explained his plan to her.

"You must go with me in the boat," he said. "Then there will be no occasion for returning to the island if we take the ship, and you will be out of all danger from the mutineers on shore."

"Oh, if we only can rescue them!"

"We can. Wait until I cut a stout cudgel, and we'll go."

"Why the cudgel, Charlie?"

"I may need it. It makes less noise than the pistol, you know."

He beat around until his hand encountered just the sized branch he wished, and cut and trimmed it with his knife.

It was a heavy weapon, and, rightly handled, would do terrible execution.

"Now, follow me," he said, "and mind you don't lose sight of me in the darkness."

Slowly and carefully they made their way through the woods until they came in sight of the fire of the mutineers.

They were all stretched out in front of the fire, apparently asleep.

They passed on without stopping until they reached the beach.

The ship's boat was there; and, peering intently through the darkness, our hero discovered, sitting upon the sand and reclining against the boat, a man on guard.

Here was a new obstacle. He had not expected this. Still, they must have the boat.

There was but one alternative.

With his club raised, ready to strike, he crept towards the man.

CHAPTER XXI.

ATTACK ON THE MUTINEERS.

Our hero thought it strange that the man did not stir.

"He must be asleep," he thought; and the boy's very soul revolted at the necessity of striking a sleeping man.

Still, they must have the boat, and this man stood in the way.

He must be removed.

He leaned forward with his club raised.

The fumes of liquor arose.

Charlie allowed the club to fall slowly.

What if the man was drunk?

In that case there would be no necessity of striking.

Holding his stick ready to strike, he placed his hand on the sailor's shoulder and shook him.

The man uttered some unintelligible words, and fell over from his sitting position and lay extended on the sand at full length.

"He's safe," muttered our hero, as he lowered the cudgel. "Thunder and lightning couldn't awake him this four hours yet."

Then, turning to his companion, who had watched in fear and trembling a little distance away, he said:

"He's all right. The fellow's dead drunk."

Then, as she came up, he placed his shoulder against the boat to launch it.

He could not move it.

The boat was hard aground.

"You must help me," he said.

Together they pushed against the boat with all their might, and at last had the satisfaction of feeling it move.

Once started the rest was easy, and soon the boat was afloat, with her bow resting against the beach.

"Now I'll go and get my clothes," said Charlie, "and then we'll start for the ship."

He hastened down the beach to the place where he had left his garments, and carried them back to the boat and placed them within it.

"Now come on," he said.

They entered the boat, and Charlie took an oar and pushed off.

He used the oar as a scull over the stern, and in this way he propelled the boat gently but surely through the water.

He did not direct his course toward the ship, but went off obliquely to the right until he reached a point in range of the bow, and a hundred yards to the right.

Then he turned the boat's bow and made directly for the ship.

The reason of this was that the crew were all in the stern of the ship, near the cabin, and if he came up to the side of the ship he would surely have been seen or heard.

As it was, they were running a great risk, for a lookout might by this time be stationed in the bow. If so, it would be all up with them.

It must be risked, however, and accordingly the boat was headed toward the bow of the ship.

On they went, not a sound being made until they arrived beneath the bowsprit.

"Hold her here," Charlie whispered to his companion. "I must go on board. You will be perfectly safe here."

His companion was trembling with excitement.

"Be calm," he whispered. "All will come right. Keep firm hold of the chains. No one can see you here."

Without waiting for her reply he left her, and climbed up the railing.

The crew were still engaged in drinking and carousing where he had left them, and he cautiously went over the same course he had pursued before until he reached the hatchway.

After listening a moment and hearing no sound, he cautiously descended.

"Captain!" he whispered.

"Is that you, Charlie?" came back the faint response.

"Yes."

"Is it all right?"

"Yes."

"Did you get the boat?"

"Yes."

"Is my my wife here?" asked Mr. Chambers.

"Yes; in the boat at the bow."

"God be praised."

"What is to be done now?" whispered Charlie.

"The attack on those scoundrels on deck must be made. The sooner the better."

"That's so. The crew on the beach may discover the loss of this boat and give the alarm."

"That's so. Let's make ready."

"Sh!"

Heavy footsteps were heard descending the ladder.

Charlie slunk away behind a bale of goods close by.

The man approaching carried a lantern, which shed a bright light around.

It was Peterson, one of the leaders of the mutineers.

He came forward and stood beside the captives, who had resumed their original positions on the floor, and to all appearance were bound tightly.

"How d've feel by this time?" asked the brute.

"None the better for seeing you, you rascal," growled Captain Inman.

"S'pose not," said Peterson. "You'll feel worse than this, though, in about ten minutes. They intended to put ye ashore, and bind ye, and let ye starve, but we've changed our opinion. In just ten minutes you'll be food for the fishes, for

we're going to tie a shot to your feet and pitch ye overboard."

"There's several opinions about that."

"Well, we'll see. I'm going on deck now to send down the men to carry ye up."

With that he turned away, and was ascending to the deck to give orders that his fiendish purpose should be carried out, when, like a flash, our hero sprang out from his hiding place.

One swing of the cudgel, and it descended on the villain's head.

Down he went, and lay quivering.

"Tie him up before he recovers," whispered Charlie. "We gained some fire-arms by that speculation."

They bound him with the very cords which had been used to confine them, and placed a gag into his mouth.

"Stay where you are," whispered the captain. "I know where there's some handspikes."

He returned in a moment and placed a handspike in the hand of each man.

CHAPTER XXII.

VICTORY—CONCLUSION.

OUR hero went up the ladder first, followed by the captain.

As he reached the deck he perceived that all the mutineers who were left on board the ship were gathered in a crowd by the bulwarks, looking toward the island.

Allowing his glance to follow theirs, he saw a ship's lantern waved up and down on shore.

He could not, of course, at that distance perceive the man who held it, but he had no doubt that the crew on shore had discovered the loss of the boat and were making signals to those on board the ship in consequence.

"Now's the best time to make an attack," he whispered to the captain. "We can creep up behind them and knock them down before they're aware of it, their attention is so taken up with those on shore."

"It couldn't have happened better," whispered the captain, in reply. "Come on, men. We'll skulk to the cabin, and behind that, out of sight of the miscreants, until we have them at arm's length before they know it. Then spring out. Come."

Silent as death, he led the way.

The cabin was reached and they were not seen.

Along it they crept until they were within three feet of the mutineers, who were still looking curiously at the light which continued to move to and fro, and making comments and surmises as to what it meant.

"Be ready!" whispered the captain.

Every man raised his handspike.

"Now!"

They sprang out with a cry upon the mutineers, and brought the handspikes down.

It was a complete surprise, and in a second three of the crew were lying senseless on the deck.

The others gazed about them in bewilderment.

Our hero and the captain presented the pistols they had taken from Peterson.

"Surrender!" cried our hero, to the heavy, brutal-looking fellow near him.

For answer the man drew his pistol.

"Drop it!" cried Charlie, his pistol leveled at the mutineer's head. "Drop it, I say! Make but a single motion to fire and I'll put a bullet through your head!"

With a sullen oath the man obeyed.

The others had already surrendered.

"Now tie these men," said the captain.

In an instant ropes were produced and they were securely bound.

They then examined the wounded men.

None of them were severely injured. The handspikes had only stunned them, without breaking the skull.

Presently they exhibited signs of returning consciousness, and looked round in a dazed, confused manner.

The signals on shore still continued.

"Wave away, ye hounds!" cried Captain Inman. "If you ever get on board the *Falcon* again, you're luckier than I take ye to be."

Charlie went to Mr. Chambers.

"We'll go after your wife now," he said.

They went to the bow of the ship and our hero descended into the boat.

"How is it?" asked Mrs. Chambers, eagerly.

"Well," said Charlie, "we have attacked and overcome the mutineers. We did it much easier than I imagined we could. They are bound and helpless now."

He paddled the boat around the ship to the quarter, when a ladder was let down and Mrs. Chambers went on board.

A moment later she was clasped in the arms of her husband.

The attention of the officers was now turned to the disarmed mutineers.

What should be done with them?

"What do you say, Charlie?" asked the captain.

"You have been the means of getting us out of their power, now what advice have you to give as to their disposition?"

Our hero thought for a moment, and then said:

"I don't think it's possible to work the ship without some of them, captain."

"Nor I; especially if it's bad weather. We couldn't possibly manage the ship in a gale."

"Then what are we to do?"

"That's what I asked you."

"If I was in command of this ship," said Charlie, "I should release the sailors we have now on board, with the exception of Peterson, the ring-leader, and put them to work."

"But wouldn't that be dangerous?"

"Not so dangerous as going to sea short-handed. Besides, we can keep watch of them until they get into port."

Here Mills spoke up.

"I believe the crew that's here, with the exception of Peterson, would behave themselves without any trouble," he said. "They've been led into this thing by him and Bloodgood, and we'll have no trouble with 'em if we send that scoundrel Peterson ashore."

The captain consulted with the officers, who came to the conclusion that the experiment must be tried.

"You go and speak to them, Charlie," he said.

Our hero went up to where the men were.

"I've come from Captain Inman with a message to you," he said.

The men remained silent; they were completely cowed and subdued.

"The message is this," continued Charlie: "he wants to know if you'll go to work and behave yourselves if he'll release you."

"Yes," said one of the sailors. "We're all of us sick enough of this job, and were led into it by Peterson and Bloodgood. We'll do our duty like men until we get into port if you'll let us go."

"Then it's a bargain," said Charlie.

"I hope the cap'n won't hand us over to the authorities when we get into port," said the sailor.

"I don't know anything about that," said our hero. "You must take your chances of that. I've no doubt, though, that it will all depend on your own conduct between this time and that."

It was now daylight, and Charlie and the captain went down into the hold to see Peterson.

They found the scoundrel tugging at his bonds and swearing fiercely.

"What do you think of things now?" said Captain Inman, sarcastically. "We're not ashore, bound to trees, to starve to death, are we, you cold-blooded rascal?"

The man made no reply, but eyed them fiercely and wickedly.

The captain walked to the ladder and called the first mate.

"We'll carry this villain up above," he said, when the officer appeared.

"I'm going to send you ashore, Peterson," he continued, when the villain was lying extended on the deck. "I should like to take you into port for trial, but don't care to risk your influence again on my crew. You'll cheat the gallows this time."

At a signal from the captain, the first and second officers carried the mutineer to the rail.

Peterson's countenance became the picture of abject terror.

"My God!" he cried. "You'll not drown me!"

"Not if you can swim," said the captain. "Although you richly deserve that fate. Cut his cords, gentlemen, and tumble him overboard."

In a moment the bonds were severed and Peterson rolled into the sea.

When he arose, he struck out for the shore, where his companions, the mutineers, could be seen gathered.

"That disposes of him," said the captain, with an air of relief. "Now unbind the men."

This was done quickly.

"Now," said the captain, "you have been guilty of the grave offense of mutiny, and conspiracy to take the lives of the officers and passengers of this ship. This crime is punishable with death. I will overlook the offense and pledge you my word not to deliver you to the authorities, on condition that you do your duty henceforth faithfully. Now go forward."

Crestfallen and repentant the men obeyed.

The ship was put under headway presently, and the island was soon in the horizon and then faded out of sight.

No further trouble occurred, and the Sandwich Islands were reached in safety.

And here for the present we leave our brave young hero, with kind and loving friends around him, and the world bright and cheerful before his eyes; wishing him hereafter prosperity and good luck.

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